This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

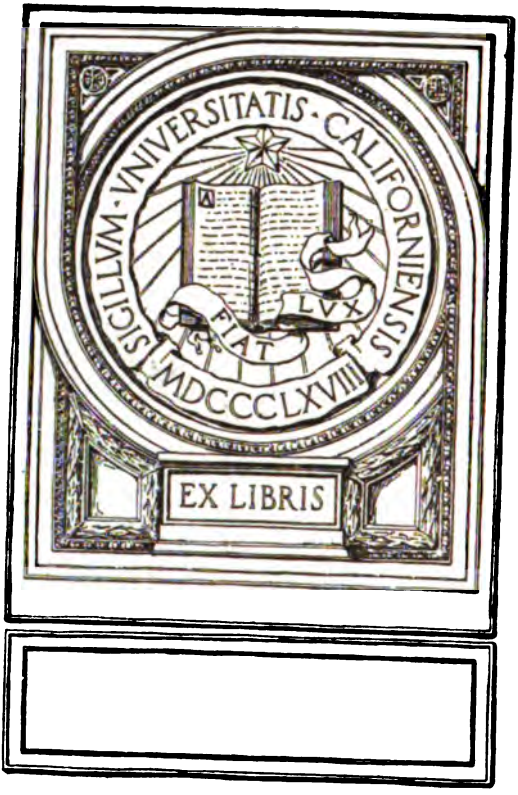
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

YB 26989

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MODERN ENGLAND

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MODERN ENGLAND

BY

LOUIS CAZAMIAN

LECTURER AT THE SORBONNE

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS, LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. 1912

Digitized by Google

HN 365
.C3

All rights reserved

Digitized by Google

FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

THIS book was meant for the French public, and aimed at giving a summary account of the evolution of a foreign nation. In submitting this translation to readers of this very country, the author begs to express his sense of diffidence in regard to the boldness of the undertaking. He wishes particularly to apologize for the many points in his study which, on this side of the Channel, must appear more or less obvious. The general economy of the book would have been destroyed had such parts been struck out.

241395

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION v

INTRODUCTION: INSTINCTIVE AND MEDITATED ADAPTATION.
Subject and limits of this study.—I. Instinct and reason as main factors of the modern evolution of England.—II. Their alternate influence in the nineteenth century 1

BOOK I

DEMOCRACY AND RATIONALISM (1832–1884)

CHAP.

I HISTORICAL CONDITIONS.
I. Industry and the making of modern England. —II. A change in the economic order; towns and country.—III. A change in the social order; the middle class 18

II DOCTRINES.
I. Rationalism and empiricism in English history. —II. The utilitarian philosophy; the political theory of democracy.—III. The economics of individualism; the Free Trade movement.— IV. Darwinism and evolutionism; the theory of adaptation. — V. Religious rationalism: Broad Church and agnosticism 34

Digitized by Google

CHAP. PAGE

III LAWS AND MANNERS.

I. The Reform Acts; the democratic movement; the evolution of parties; Liberals and Conservatives; the mechanism of government; the authority of the Crown.—II. Liberal logic and the reform of English administration; the modern evolution of social life.—III. The new manners and the influence of the middle class; public opinion; literature.—IV. The waning of middle-class initiative . . 64

BOOK II

THE REVENGE OF INSTINCT (1832–1884)

INTRODUCTION 89

I HISTORICAL CONDITIONS.

I. The social elements of the reaction against the new order: the strength and prestige of the nobility; the moral elements; sensibility and the idealistic needs.—II. The economic unrest; the industrial anarchy; the forms and effects of want in the nineteenth century . 92

II DOCTRINES.

I. The philosophy of Carlyle; his social doctrine; heroism; State intervention and feudalism. His influence; the evolution of economic concepts.—II. The religious revival; the Oxford Movement; its results; ritualism; the Catholic reaction.—III. The æsthetic movement; spontaneousness and will in English art; Ruskin, his artistic and social message; his influence 109

Digitized by Google

CHAP. PAGE

III LAWS AND MANNERS.

I. The amending of industrial anarchy; factory and labour legislation; emotional and rational philanthropy; the reform of social abuses.—II. The movement for the organization of labour; English Trade-Unionism: its evolution and means of action.—III. The instinctive and conservative elements of the new manners; snobbery; the Puritan reaction; social compunction.—IV. The literature of feeling and imagination.—V. The psychological origins of Imperialism.—VI. The social equilibrium and public optimism about 1870 . . . 146

BOOK III

THE NEW PROBLEMS (1884–1910)

INTRODUCTION 180

I THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM.

I. The flagging of English prosperity; foreign competition; the anxiety of public opinion.—II. The proposed remedies: the Free Trade Radical solution; the Protectionist cure . 185

II THE SOCIAL PROBLEM.

I. New appearance and greater urgency of the problem.—II. Contemporary English Socialism; the Marxists; the Fabians; municipal Socialism.—III. The formation of the Labour Party; the new Trade-Unionism; the Labour Party in the House of Commons . . . 201

Digitized by Google

CHAP. PAGE

III THE POLITICAL PROBLEM.

I. The contemporary evolution of parties; Home Rule and the dissenting Liberals; the rise of the Unionist party; its tendencies.—II. The crisis of Liberalism and its new awakening; the Radical elements of the Liberal party; the heterogeneous character of its tendencies.—III. The recent political conflict; its causes and possible consequences 218

IV THE IMPERIAL PROBLEM.

I. The intellectual and emotional elements of the Imperialist doctrine.—II. The programme of action; the ends, the means, and the difficulties met with 238

V THE INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM.

The leading ideas of contemporary England.—I. Traditionalism in the religious movement, in education, public life, collective feelings, artistic tastes.—II. Pragmatism; its relation to English utilitarianism. The pragmatic theory of truth. Analogous tendencies: moral hygiene, the craving for energy, the return to Nature.—III. Rationalism and the new conditions of life. Religious criticism; the modes of unbelief. The criticism of the political and social order; the "intellectuals" and English culture; the influence of rationalism upon education, manners, the psychological temperament, the artistic and literary evolution . 249

Digitized by Google

PAGE

CONCLUSION. THE PRESENT TIME. DECADENCE OR EVOLUTION 282

GENERAL INDEX 289

INDEX OF DATES 292

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

MODERN ENGLAND

INTRODUCTION

INSTINCTIVE AND MEDITATED ADAPTATION

Subject and limits of this study.—I. Instinct and reason as main factors of the modern evolution of England.—II. Their alternate influence in the nineteenth century.

THE predominant fact in the history of England for the last hundred years has been a hidden conflict between a tendency to instinctive readjustments, which she owes to her early history, and a tendency to rational adaptations, due to the conditions of modern life. Taking the lead by turns, those two forces have combined, at every period, according to a complex and ever-changing ratio. One stands for the past, the other claims to stand for the future. They have both played essential parts and possessed rich usefulness; at the present day, the advantage seems to belong to the latter. But there is no decisive reason for believing in its complete and definitive victory. For it has not struck into the national consciousness such deep and primeval roots as the former; it is, after all, but one of its secondary growths. The same blind energy bent on conquering the world of facts is still finding a new but not self-contradictory expression in the

Digitized by Google

great effort of will, intelligence and method through which the England of to-day, resuming the work which that of yesterday had only begun, tries to adapt her national activities to the more scientific requirements of life, production and war.

The traditional view of England has been widely diffused in France; it answered to the necessarily simple needs of the average mind. A lasting contact with the strong original British genius has sunk the feeling of a difference into the very marrow of our bones; two centuries of competition, fighting or friendship with England have driven home to us the pronounced characteristics of English empiricism, so foreign to our own temperament. The almost parallel fates of the two oldest nations in Europe, the common points in their civilizations, the analogies in their recent political developments, have brought out strongly the moral and practical differences by which the two sides of the Channel are so strikingly distinguished in their governments, industries, societies and religions.

But the notion of a stubbornly instinctive England became commonplace with us only at the very time when it ceased to be completely true. If we consider them no longer in their instructive contrast with French logic, but as they really are, the modern activities of the English people must be depicted in more diversified colours. This book aims at delineating, if possible, that more accurate and complex view of the principles which to-day underlie the practical decisions of England.

Such a study must needs remain of a very

Digitized by Google

general order. It requires the reader's indulgence on many points. Obviously it cannot but be very incomplete. Its subject is too wide to allow of precision in details; its narrow bounds and its aim have prevented all statement of proofs or authorities. In no way can it then aspire to scientific rigour. It may plead as an apology the relatively modest nature of its claims. For it is not an historical survey, but an essay in the philosophy of history; it does not relate the facts, but tries to trace the main lines along which they can best be grouped. The author would like to supply such minds as wish to understand the England of yesterday and of to-day with a very brief account of the enormous source of material and moral activities which, at the present time, fills up such a wide space in the world; and to point out as clearly as possible the origin and growth of the forces which are driving her to-day towards an unknown destiny.

As soon as one aims at going beyond the most summary generalities and gaining an accurate view of English affairs, one must admit of essential distinctions within the physical boundaries of that political unit we call England, and no less essential adjuncts without it. To treat the matter fully, one should give separate attention to the diverse moral and social characteristics of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and study the problems which contemporary England has to solve under the various aspects they assume in each of those countries, sufficiently distinct yet to play their own parts in the national drama. One should, as well, bring Imperial questions to the forefront, and look upon the British

Digitized by Google

Empire from the point of view of the world, not of Europe only. It is obvious enough that the present study is too short not to leave out those causes of complexity. England will be here spoken of as if she constituted a homogeneous whole such as France; and the forms of her thought and life will be regarded only as they belong to her central unity. We may as a rule object to such simplifications; but they are perhaps pardonable when one tries to describe, in its general evolution, the focus of moral and physical activity which is the heart of the British Empire.

It would not be convenient, and it is not necessary, to enumerate the authorities on which this book is based. Such a general view can, it goes without saying, be to any degree accurate only by constantly borrowing its substance from competent writers. Let us simply mention our indebtedness to a few essential works.[1]

[1] Some of the most interesting suggestions on the general development of modern England have been put forth in the books of Messrs. Benn: (*Modern England*, 1908); Masterman (*The Condition of England*, 1909); Dicey (*Law and Opinion in England*, 1905); Lowell (*The Government of England*, 1908); Webb (*Industrial Democracy*, 1897); Mantoux (*À travers l'Angleterre Contemporaine*, 1909); Chevrillon (*Etudes Anglaises*, 1901, etc.); Bérard (*L'Angleterre et l'Impérialisme*, 1900); Bardoux (*Essai d'une Psychologie de l'Angleterre Contemporaine*, 1906, etc.).—As for the facts themselves, a summary bibliography of English history in the nineteenth century is collected in the book of Low and Sanders, *The History of England during the Reign of Queen Victoria*, 1907. Again, a list of the best works on the various aspects of political and social life in England is to be found in *Social England* (edited by H. D. Traill), vol. vi., 1898. Those lists make it unnecessary for us to give here one far less complete and useful.

Digitized by Google

I

THE unceasing effort by which a nation lives and endures, increases or sustains its life, is above all an adaptation. An adaptation to natural conditions,—its physical and human surroundings; and to social conditions,—a necessary economic, political and moral order. The development of a given country, whatever the period considered, is as a whole characterized by the manner and degree of that adaptation. Holding good everywhere, this assertion is nowhere more easily verified than in England. It is the most original trait of the English genius, as everybody knows, to have first understood, or at least adhered to, the practical solution of the problem of national existence; it has ever perceived the physical or moral conditions in the midst of which it moved as supreme facts, which must be always and primarily investigated, and accepted or corrected, by the exertions of one and all.

Thus considered, the development of England has been continuous through all its stages; and the underlying laws which direct and can explain it are perfectly consistent. But as soon as one has in view no longer the universal and necessary fact of adaptation, but rather the particular forms it assumes, two main processes appear. One is instinctive; systematically, as it were, neglecting all system, it gives free play to the countless different forces that make for readjustment, pliancy and balance, and through which either the units or the naturally constituted groups in a nation sponta-

Digitized by Google

neously adapt themselves to the exigencies of life. In this operation, consciousness takes hardly any share, and reason is not called upon to take any; everything begins and ends in the domain of obscure activities by which our motions answer to circumstances, and our decisions to the appeals of the universe. Infallible whenever it pursues an imperfect, relative and temporary equilibrium, this method as a rule fails to establish at once a complex harmony with given conditions as a whole; nor does it succeed in bringing about continuity and consistency in the means chosen and the instruments turned to use. Such has traditionally been the attitude of England; its effects can be traced throughout history; its stamp is to be found at the present time on British institutions, industries, manners, ideas and feelings.

The other might be defined by its intellectual, rational character. In it, a demand for co-ordination and symmetry, a striving after clearness and order, a conscious and voluntary adjustment of the means to their ends and to one another, are added to, and even to some degree replace, the spontaneous effort of particular adaptations. This method is liable to the numberless errors by which the persistent clash between nature and the mind of man is made manifest; it possesses neither the safety nor the practical convenience of the former, and requires untiring energy of study and meditation. A profession of faith in the power of thought, it aims at extracting from facts an order all the elements of which they do not themselves supply, and whose principle the mind bears within

Digitized by Google

itself. Its failures can be ascribed to its superficial and premature application; its triumphs have stamped reality with a character of supreme simplicity and beauty which outlives the fleeting of time. It is a well-known fact that this method has given the development of France, especially during the last two centuries, its most individual quality.

What conflicting temperaments, what physical and psychological dispositions, these opposed methods can be traced back to, and what diverging consequences, what diverse social features they have resulted in, we all know to-day. This antithesis, again, need no longer be stated; it belongs to the domain of truisms. Let us only point out that the former attitude is the one that life does in fact choose for itself, whilst the latter must be adopted by science; so we may say that the historical originality of England has lain in preferring life to science in the general direction of her national effort.

But such a preference has nothing of the strictness of a system; would it not, indeed, contradict itself in becoming systematic? During the last hundred years, the general conditions of economic, social and moral life have undergone a thorough change; and the part played by intelligence and science seems to have been constantly on the increase. Now, the vital instinct of England seems to be transforming itself in keeping with this transformation of all things; and this is no doubt the reason why, in the England of to-day, instinctive and rational adaptations are to be found at the same time.

Digitized by Google

These two forms of man's unavoidable and self-interested submission to nature, these two general formulæ of the policy of life, are rather tendencies than exclusive and sharply marked attitudes; they are not incompatible, and they shade off into each other. The latter is not of necessity pure rationalism, deductive and absolute, in which form it has sometimes existed in France; nor is the former, as has too often been said, opposed to all rationalism by an *a priori* uncompromising hostility, as it were; it will not refuse the latter's co-operation under the pressure of facts, and will thus merge into it. No doubt the predominance of the one or the other is sufficient to characterize a people. It is agreed upon by all that the life-force of the English has on the whole chosen the ways to which it was impelled by instinct; and that if it has sometimes aimed at linking together the roads it followed, at organizing them into a chart of human experience, it was not in the hope of forecasting the aspect of the ground which the future would cover, of mapping it out in advance, and proceeding from the known to the unknown by the light of reason. But to reduce the intellectual history of modern England to that one feature would mean simplifying it overmuch. In fact, for the last century, an important though secondary part has been played by intelligence in directing the evolution of England; at the present time this part is increasing, and in the future it will no doubt increase even more; and into the very process of instinctive readjustment consciousness and reflection have penetrated, modifying it materially from within. The instinc-

Digitized by Google

tive and the meditated modes of adaptation are both English to-day; the former constitutes the only kind of practical system spontaneously evolved by traditional England; the latter, the only theoretical philosophy of action with which the England of the future can rest satisfied.

As has been said before, they predominated by turns during the last century. Let us give a summary account of their alternation; this book will try and fill up the outline.

II

Modern England has been slowly growing from the middle of the eighteenth century, and even, in a way, from the end of the sixteenth; she outgrew this preparatory stage, without any sudden change, between 1815 and 1840, or thereabout. For convenience' sake, it will be assumed here that she came fully to light more precisely during the critical years which preceded the accession of Queen Victoria.

Social England after Waterloo, in spite of the disintegrating and revolutionary forces secretly at work, did not, however, differ so much from the society Voltaire had seen as from that we see to-day. Nevertheless, when the young Queen ascended the throne in 1837, the main lines of English democracy were already broadly sketched, and economic, political, social, intellectual life settled into a new equilibrium on a lasting basis. On the other hand, the eleven years which the twentieth century already numbers constitute, to

Digitized by Google

all appearance, the beginning of a transition. As a whole, this book still aims at studying the England of the Victorian era, together with that of Edward VII, which followed on the same lines and is inseparable from it.

Within this period of eighty years (1830–1910), from the point of view we have just mentioned, one can distinguish three stages, the limits of which are in no way immovable or arbitrary. However relatively smooth the change which gave rise to modern England may have been, she grew by opposing herself to the England of the past; and however intimately the forces making for progress and those making for reaction may have worked together in that splendid social achievement, the former took the initiative and gave the primary and principal impulse. Now, these forces were by nature intellectual; or rather they most often found a rational expression, and the ideal of reorganization which they proposed to the older order differed from that order by a more logical, methodical and thoughtful faculty of adaptation.

No doubt the remarkable success of the last English revolution (1832–1867–1884), as well as that of the preceding one (1688), was due to the political and practical instincts of the English people; but that last revolution must be set apart from all the others in so far as it was at the same time the clear-sighted work of reflection, and the empirical outcome of instinctive adaptation. A wave of social and political rationalism, driving back the waters borne away at one time by the ebb of the anti-revolutionary movement, swelled again

Digitized by Google

in England during the years which followed Waterloo; shortly after 1830, it overflowed the dams of the old constitution and the old life; bringing along with it a democratic reform of laws and manners, a systematic correction of the most glaring social evils, freedom in trade and in business undertakings, liberalism in a word and individualism, it spread widely over all the central part of the century, and made its impetus and strength still felt during its waning years. Modern England has primarily grown from a first effort to harmonize society, laws and thought with new, clearly defined conditions; she has primarily originated in an attempt at meditated adaptation.

It was, on the contrary, by the free play of instinctive readjustments that she amplified and strengthened her existence. No sooner had the individualistic and liberal England which John Stuart Mill symbolizes realized all her inner possibilities, than a powerful reaction of instincts rose against her. To the light of reason many thinkers and poets preferred that of feeling as a guidance for the new nation. An unavoidable correction of moral callousness and social egotism was effected, in which the apostles of reason had no part, whilst other prophets extolled the saving virtue of faith and instinct, and the blind, fruitful powers of life. Having adapted herself to science and industry through freedom of thought and trade, England no longer acknowledged the cravings of the soul; and Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman, Browning, brought about a readjustment of the English conscience to its own spiritual wants.

Digitized by Google

Along with or after them, other men re-created collective activities and social or moral links in a society put out of joint by individualism; a spontaneous growth gave birth to trade unions; State interference groped its way into the statute-book, and went on increasing its hold upon it every day; the spirit of the law, as well as that of custom, was permeated by a new feeling of solidarity; and religious or æsthetic mysticism fostered an enthusiastic devotion to mankind. As a last stage in the free expansion of instincts came Imperialism; a mysterious intuition of common interests and psychological affinities united the mother-country to her far-away daughters by a thrilling sympathy; and the intoxicating pride of her world-wide power seized on the mind of England. State Socialism, the religious revival, the artistic movement and Imperialism, born at the same time as democracy and Free Trade, were the various expressions of the "revenge of instinct."

Having thus settled again into a stable relation with material and moral circumstances, England might well believe she had finally adapted herself to the new world. The prosperous years from 1860 to 1880 were a period of optimism and unfaltering trust in the future. But soon other problems arose. English industry, till then supreme in all markets, must now struggle against competitors growing daily more aggressive; new nations—the United States, Germany—threatened the commercial privileges and the political influence of Great Britain, though not yet her independence. At the same time, a crisis at home corresponded

Digitized by Google

to perils abroad. The social question came to the front again in a wider, more dangerous shape; the Labour Party, stronger every year, claimed its standing by the side of the historic parties. The latter were weakened by an inner principle of decay; drawn together by the necessity of social conservation, they were merged into one mass, in which identical instincts could hardly be disguised under various political tenets. Liberalism, which to that day had remained living and efficient, was disintegrated by coming into contact with new needs; critical and negative in its principles, it proved unable to organize either democracy or the Empire.

At that very moment, the necessity for a rational organization made itself more pressingly felt; trade unions demanded more clearly defined rights for their increasing strength; the dogma of Free Trade was questioned, then shaken by the pressure of Protectionist tendencies; and the relations of the mother-country with the various parts of the Empire required the invention of new political formulæ. Anxiety in men's minds answered to this unsettled state of affairs; the Church was endangered on one side by the progress of rationalism, on the other by sectarian differences and the ritualist agitation; philosophy stood wavering between the old beliefs and the bold innovations of the day; literature was overflowed by foreign influences, and a hankering after emotion and sensation permeated the healthy artistic tradition of England. By the end of Queen Victoria's reign, at the beginning of the twentieth century,

Digitized by Google

British greatness, though still offering a stately front, might seem threatened with impending decay.

The present time shows us a revival of English energy, passionately bent on maintaining the national community sound and whole. A new readjustment has become unavoidable, and once again the instinct of the race looks for it in the clear and well-defined paths so long distasteful to it. In order to bear the competition of rival nations, younger, better equipped with logic and method, to raise the standard of her human value, to make each citizen a more active, better taught, more useful agent in the common struggle, to be prepared, in case of need, to defend her territory against a formidably trained invader, to increase, in a word—a watchword indeed—her national efficiency, England is to-day straining every nerve. And this effort brings her to seek in science and her self-consciousness for means of meditated adaptation quicker and more consistent than those of life.

Instinct with renewed and vigorous youth, imbued with a radical spirit, the Liberal party boldly takes the lead in the necessary reforms; it now stands in England, more than ever before, for the systematic correction of social evils. The nation at large follows its guidance, or yields to, whilst fighting against it; and though the opposition of instinctive and conservative England succeeds in retarding the movement as with a powerful check, it fails to stop it. Nay, this very opposition assumes a revolutionary aspect; in the present crisis

Digitized by Google

we see two programmes of substantial reforms confronting each other; and when they rejected the 1909 Budget, the Lords chose quite as bold a course as did the Asquith Ministry in the Parliament Bill.

Meanwhile, a systematic plan presides over the development of public education; more attention is being paid every day to the technical parts of industry and commerce; the expediency of tariff reform and imperial federation is eagerly discussed; the navy is methodically strengthened, the army reorganized, and the possibility of conscription seriously considered. Those expenses call for new resources; the Liberal party provides for them with heavier taxes on wealth; the Unionist party by advocating the abandonment of Free Trade; and for or against Finance Bills, between Lords and Commons, rages a political conflict of exceptional import.

In that atmosphere the national type itself is modified; infected with the nervousness and restlessness of modern life, the Englishman of to-day has grown less unlike his Continental neighbour. At the same time, thinkers and politicians proclaim the necessity for England of becoming more conscious of herself, more intelligent and learned; and through religion, daily life, hygiene, manners, a new spirit is diffused, a universal pragmatism, eagerly watching the social and practical consequences of both notions and acts. Contemporary England is striving to achieve intelligent efficiency.

Thus do the moral and social characteristics of a great people change under the stress of circum-

Digitized by Google

stances. This evolution is deep and pronounced enough to give the England of to-day a unique character. Shall we say yet that it completely severs her from her past? As was stated above, it would be misleading to take it so. The ultimate cause of this new search for an equilibrium, as on all previous occasions, is the instinctive will to live; and life is still here directing towards method and science the forces it formerly grudged to anything but experience. It is by the teaching of facts, not by a spontaneous preference, or an abstract principle, that England has been or is being convinced of the need to substitute more modern ways for the ancient sacred routine of her action and thought; empiricism, in one word, has found fault with empiricism. Indeed, in the present instance, the general doctrines in which the practical philosophy of a people usually finds its expression neither preceded nor accompanied the new turn that practice was taking. Contemporary England has not yet clearly formulated her new tendencies. She is still, in spite of her craving for more intelligence, the country in which the leading influence is least wielded by systems and abstract ideas. The principles that guide her actions must be inferred from those actions themselves; and to study the British people at the present, or at any period of their history, is to investigate not so much their doctrines as their doings.

In conclusion, this book will briefly state the impression a sympathetic observer can gather from the present state of England; the question will also be raised whether the improved method through

Digitized by Google

which she tries to increase her efficiency seems fitted to produce the desired end; whether this bold attempt at a moral transformation may not prove an unnecessary violence done to an ancient habit; and whether we should not interpret it as a symptom of some deep-set uneasiness through which is revealed the flagging of English vitality. Whatever one's final impression may be, it is certain that this vitality is still admirably strong, and that no one can yet foresee the day when it will be spent.

Digitized by Google

BOOK I

DEMOCRACY AND RATIONALISM (1832–1884)

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

I. Industry and the making of modern England.—II. A change in the economic order: towns and country.—III. A change in the social order: the middle class.

I

THE chief economic cause from which modern England has sprung is the development of industry and commerce in the eighteenth century. More generally, the predominance of large-scale industry has been the main characteristic of English social activities for the last century and a half. Now, the very notion of industrial processes bears a direct relation to that of rational readjustment. The improvement in mechanical production, the rise of new classes and of a new social order, the formation of political and moral theories deduced from rational principles, and the institution of democracy in government and life, are intimately connected phenomena. In the intricate interplay of their actions and reactions, whatever may be the succession man's mind enforces upon them, a common

Digitized by Google

feature is apparent from the first: they all manifest the same effort to impose some conscious discipline on the forces of nature or of the race, and to introduce among them through the working of the intelligence a clearer and better correlation of means to ends.

From the day when in the course of its experiments the English genius had discovered the superiority of industry on a large scale over the older routines of production, the germ of a reform was planted deep in its inmost psychological tendencies. Instead of the slow, disconnected methods of nature, man was substituting in an important province of social life proceedings elaborately coordinated so as to economize the expenditure of strength and increase its productive power. Thenceforth, the ideal of systematic and rational organization was sure to grow by the side of the former ideal exclusively based on tradition and habit; empiricism was receiving its due counterpart, meditated adaptation. The moment (1791) when Burke gave its definitive expression to the well-known theory of the wise political passiveness of the British people, was the very time when, in the depths of the national life, the industrial tide was swelling which was to bring forth a reforming England. Factories and works were, before Radical doctrines or reform bills, the first examples and the first fruits on English soil of rationally systematized social activity.

By its origins, it is true, the industrial era still belonged to empiricism. The great inventions of the age were due to practical shrewdness applying

Digitized by Google

itself occasionally and locally to the problems of production and exchange. But before long, their consequences accumulating and influencing one another through their natural affinities, they grew into a distinctly systematic whole, which encompassed all the field of economic life in an ever-widening circle. From that time there appeared a kind of logic and, as it were, of order in inventions themselves; they sprang from needs realized in succession, at points which might, so to speak, have been expected, and thus became a part of rational adaptation.

Again, natural conditions, either physical or moral, did greatly contribute to the development of English industry. The existence of large coal and iron fields, the situation of the mining districts close to navigable rivers, estuaries or sea-ports, could not but turn the destinies of England towards an industrial future. On the other hand, though the faculty of methodical organization on a large scale is a newly acquired and still insecure possession of the English mind, its powers of attention, initiative and energy date from its very beginnings. Ardent from the first in its contest with the material world, it was destined to curb the forces of nature and turn them to use before a people of a more speculative disposition could have even conquered them. Thus the primary conditions from which the transformation of modern England sprang were bound up with the physical and moral characteristics of the English land and race; here once more one may say that nothing happened by mere chance; that

Digitized by Google

England, by undergoing the change which industry brought about, only fulfilled her destiny. The length of her coast-line, her exterior and insular position in Europe, the preferences of her inhabitants, had made her a commercial nation. It is well known how in the eighteenth century economic and political causes secured for her the sovereignty of the sea, and how her colonial empire grew. The new facilities afforded for trade, the extension of the market, called for more intensive production; modern industry rose out of modern commerce. And in the iron, spinning and weaving industries, long established in England, the originality and perseverance which resulted in the invention of new machinery, the patient efforts of a Boulton, a Watt, a Crompton, still belonged to that continuous line of exertions from which, under the sole guidance of instinct, without any systematic view, the material welfare, the political order and the national greatness of the English people have wholly taken rise.

But as soon as the industrial system was fully developed, this creation of triumphant empiricism proved adverse to empiricism. The inner movement with which the organism was instinct was quicker, more unbroken, than that of the older economic cycles; in it, the correspondence between supply and demand obeyed a more rapid and regular rhythm; the necessity to produce more at lower cost worked like a constantly accelerating impulse; and the formation of a world-wide market, all the parts of which were interdependent and open to the same influences, required of all manu-

Digitized by Google

facturers a capacity for taking in a large field at one glance. Simultaneously, science, either pure or applied, became daily a more essential part of the industrial process; technical arts grew more elaborate, their operations more minute and precise. Every factory acted like a magnet, drawing to itself well-trained minds and powers of organization as well as daring and energetic characters. So industry was a radiating centre of the scientific spirit; it tended to undermine routine or to permeate it with an empiricism ever more methodical, self-reforming and alert; it gave rise to quicker and more conscious readjustments. So far, it was indeed at the starting-point of that evolutionary process, moral as well as economic, which to this day characterizes modern England; and it has had countless ever-widening consequences in all the provinces of thought and action.

For modern industry, commercial expansion, and the capitalistic state of society which prepared the way for and followed them have been influences unceasingly at work; their social and moral effects have developed without any stop, if not without any check, all through the nineteenth century. It was between the years 1770 and 1800 that the industrial era opened in England. The preceding years had witnessed the rise of commerce and of the merchant class; mills, the first signs of a concentration in industry, had been built in the higher valleys, on the banks of torrents which supplied them with motive power. Before long the steam-engine was improved; the spinning- and weaving-machines were invented; steam was used

Digitized by Google

as their motive power. The manufacture of pottery was transformed, that of iron renewed. In the northern and western counties, in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Staffordshire, an ever-increasing population, a building rage, a fever of enterprise, multiplied the number of factories and industrial centres. By the end of the eighteenth century England was already the land of modern industry.

From 1800 to 1830, in spite of political or economic disturbances, this onward progress was pursued. The carrying traffic afforded new employment to capital and the faculties of initiative, and new facilities to commerce. The population of England, the figures of her trade, her productive activity, increased with one and the same impulse. The industrial centres grew, business towns of mushroom growth overtook the older, quiet cities; a new nation grew up outside the pale of ancient society. And this evolution was to become ever more intense, to the very last years of the century. One can perceive ups and downs in English economic history from 1830 to 1880. But, on the whole, statistics point to an ever-increasing industrial and commercial prosperity.

The nineteenth century in England was filled, to its declining years, by that abundant, inexhaustible tidal wave of enterprise, production and wealth which rose on British ground during the eighteenth century. Whatever may be the rivalries of the present, the anxieties of the future, the main characteristic of modern England is still her intense economic activity; she is still the native country, if not the only home, of fully developed industry.

Digitized by Google

II

The consequences of this economic movement are all apparent in the England of to-day; but they came to light successively in that of yesterday. The first and most obvious struck all observers as early as the beginning of the last century. England still bears its strongly marked stamp. It is possible to describe it by saying that life ebbed from the country to the towns, from agriculture to commerce and industry, from the south to the north and west. Such are the chief aspects of what might be called a shifting of the natural and social equilibrium.

When speaking of the industrial revolution, historians mention as well an agrarian one. In the latter half of the eighteenth century agriculture in England seemed to be struck with incurable decay. Till then the cultivation of the soil and the breeding of cattle had been, with commerce, the chief sources of public wealth. The older, still half-mediæval society—that which lives in Fielding's novels—was essentially of the agricultural type. Governed by an aristocracy of landlords and squires, the English people was mainly composed of peasants and farmers. The country, leaving out the larger towns, was divided into economic circles rather narrow, almost independent of one another, producing nearly all the necessaries of life, and gathered round trade centres of limited attraction, the market towns.

The new prosperity of commerce and industry

Digitized by Google

acted like a disintegrating force upon that well-ordered state of things. The landowners, in whom the spirit of enterprise was stirring more and more, carried out by legal contrivances the enclosure of common pastures, the free use of which was an indispensable resource for a whole class of labourers and copyholders. At the same time, wealthy merchants and manufacturers were buying large estates and turning productive land into parks. Home industry—the hand-loom weaving of cloth, which occupied the leisure-time of country people, was ruined by the competition of machinery. The bait of higher wages drew to the industrial centres crowds of farmers and field-labourers whom poverty drove from their homes. Lastly, the commercial expansion which came before and followed the rise of modern industry considerably enlarged the market in which England could buy her food. The exportation of industrial goods to foreign lands called for a compensatory import trade in agricultural produce. Thus was a new economic system organized within a few decades; agriculture was neglected to the advantage of industry and commerce; and England became entirely dependent on the rest of the world for her subsistence as well as for her wealth.

Such were the causes of that desertion of country districts which has grown more marked ever since. Cottages crumbled to ruin or were pulled down by the impatient purchasers of the ground; whole villages were swept away; a migrating people invaded the industrial quarters of large towns. The proportion of the rural population to the urban

Digitized by Google

kept constantly decreasing; it is now lower in England than anywhere else. The various parts of Great Britain did not equally feel this social upheaval. Geological and geographical causes had concentrated the new industries in the north-western and south-western regions, and in the south of Scotland; in these parts chiefly the populous towns developed; in the eastern and southern counties, and in Ireland, solitude and desolation prevailed. The industrial, busy, energetic north, and the agricultural, drowsy, aristocratic south, thus stood opposed. At the present day, the traveller who goes over the gently undulating regions of the south and of the midlands, or follows the eastern coast up to the borders of Scotland, crosses fields which the nature of the soil and the damp climate keep always green, bounded by hedges, strewn with clumps of trees; the whole looks bright and pleasant, but cultivation is lacking, and human habitations are scarce. Wide pleasure-grounds and game preserves, groves, and vast meadows, surround the castles, manor-houses or farms; here and there from behind the rich dark-green foliage of the oaks rises the grey tower of a village church.

How different is the impression when one draws near the industrial districts, the more important harbours, London above all, the huge town which sums up within itself all English economic activities; an intense, noisy life replaces the drowsy stillness of the fields and villages; on the dark misty sky stand out scores of tall chimneys, railways stretch away in every direction; rows of small brick houses, huddled close together, yellow or red,

Digitized by Google

all similar, surround the swarming, bustling, murky business centres in an ever-widening circle. Whole counties thus constitute vast urban districts, hardly chequered with scanty gardens and a few starved patches of green; the smoke never completely clears away, the thud of machines ever shakes the ground with a dull vibration. Caused by an evolution common to all the European countries of advanced civilization, this contrast is in England more striking, more thorough, than anywhere else.

A more precise economic description of the English land should, of course, add many shades to the preceding sketch. There are intermediate districts, in which industry and field-work are both practised; some branches of agriculture are still thriving, and life has not entirely ebbed away from the country. A summary survey must leave out anything but the pronounced traits of that economic and social opposition which is the salient feature of both the physical and the human aspects of England. This nation has carried to its utmost limit the evolution which, during the nineteenth century, drove European civilization out of its former surroundings. Turned to use only as the source of mineral wealth, the earth has more and more become the mere necessary support of all national activities; and its surface tends to be only the floor of an immense workshop. Uprooted from the open country which had given it its vigour, the race must more and more feel the strain of town life. One half of England is overpopulated, the other half seems stricken with

Digitized by Google

decay. A clearer realization of this essential fact and its consequences contributes in no small degree to the spirit of reform which at present urges men's wishes towards a salutary readjustment, a return to nature.

III

The new nation which grew up in the towns all through the nineteenth century comprised two equally active orders, whose unavoidable antagonism was thenceforth to be the main moving power of English politics. Along with modern industry were developed the urban workman and the middle-class tradesman.

No doubt, the town working men were not the only members of that particularly disinherited order whose grievances, in England as elsewhere, have promoted or inspired most social theories, schemes and enactments. English Socialism has not only sprung from industrial poverty; the condition of the workers of the fields—labourers, small farmers—made still more serious by the agricultural crisis, was an important chapter of the social question in the nineteenth century. But, on the whole, the proletariat was made up of the workshop and factory operatives. The distribution of that human mass and, as it were, that human race through the industrial regions of the north and west, the formation of its moral idiosyncrasies, the shaping of new economic organizations intended as weapons for the defence of its interests,

Digitized by Google

the hidden or open pressure of its discontent or wishes on public opinion and the government, and the birth of a class-consciousness common to its various parts, are social facts of primary importance in the recent history of England.

However, the working men's movements, their aims and efforts, as well as the feelings and actions which the sight of their debased condition has suggested to other classes, belong rather to the domain of instinctive than to that of meditated adaptation. Scientific Socialism has not met in England with the same fortune as in Germany; and the intervention of the State has not so much been justified by systematic theories as advocated by intuitive doctrines and exemplified by empirical activities. It was only at a recent date that the positive investigation of the social problem, of its material and moral factors, its possible solutions or alleviations, became a formative element of that general frame of mind which may be considered as the characteristic feature of contemporary England: the voluntary and thoughtful wish for a better national organization. Until that time, the direct influence of the proletariat in the psychological or the political field must be considered as associated with another aspect of modern English history, which could be described as a recoil of rationalism and meditated adaptation. That influence will be studied along with the "revenge of instinct."

On the contrary, the development of the trading order was closely connected with the wave of rationalism which broke at the time when modern

Digitized by Google

England was rising. The progress of the middle class was the social equivalent of both these movements,—intellectual and spiritual alike. This class embodied in itself the spirit and influence of that large-scale industry of which it was the outcome; it was the focus of that zeal for a more conscious adaptation which seized and impelled the English mind after 1830. So its strength, its temper and tendencies must be summed up at once before passing on to liberal doctrines and the advent of democracy.

In the eighteenth century the middle class was still the "gentry," half aristocratic, mostly composed of landowners, clergy, and lawyers. Even then, however, the increase of the merchant class in number and wealth introduced into that old-fashioned body a more modern element, imbued with an impatient, innovating spirit. Between 1760 and 1830 the new recruits swamped the older ranks. Mill owners, manufacturers, business managers, merchants, brokers, capitalists, had multiplied along with the wonderful expansion of industry and commerce. In London, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle, and in a score of less busy centres, they had seized upon that social supremacy which is the privilege of riches, and throughout the kingdom their aspirations, their instincts, united them in a common will, stirred in them the consciousness of their strength and their rights.

Their strength had to make itself felt, their rights to make themselves recognized; there were many obstacles in their path. In the former state

Digitized by Google

of things, where the measure of wealth was the possession of land, men were fixed to one spot, the landlord by his interest, the tenant by the survival of feudal customs. The economic doctrines, yet in their first stage, and based on the mercantile theory, considered the accumulation of gold and silver as a standard of the wealth of nations, and everywhere set up barriers against their free circulation. Industry was thus hampered by laws and the habits of life. It needed workmen, and there were regulations to limit the number of apprentices, to forbid all emigration of country labourers to the towns. It needed free exchange of goods, that food might be cheap, wages low, and that British trade should not meet with prohibitive tariffs in foreign lands; the spirit of the old statute-book was protectionist, and after 1815 the Corn Laws raised the price of bread to the advantage of landlords.

No doubt these obstacles were not insurmountable; what the law had done the law could undo. But at this point the new merchant class came into collision with the political structure of the old society. The English constitution about the end of the eighteenth century was anything but democratic. The will of the ruling classes alone was consulted in the choice of the national representatives; members were nominated by noble patrons, corporations, or a few electors, mostly persons of influence and wealth. The most important centres of industry and commerce, the new large towns, were excluded from the franchise; the constituencies were the same as of old, and the decay of most of the old boroughs did not deprive them of

Digitized by Google

their now unjustifiable privileges. Here a farm would appoint a member, there a populous, busy town would elect none. Lastly, the mind of the nation was yet imbued with feudal prejudices; social prestige was the appanage of landed wealth; the ownership of land was the source of honours, functions, responsibilities, if it was no longer the unique source of power; commerce and industry, on the other hand, were yet tainted with social inferiority; the nobility, the gentry, the professions, looked down upon manufacturers and merchants.

In the coming struggle, the latter could count upon the vigour of a new-born class, and of unsatisfied appetites. They had courage, loved effort for its own sake, and possessed the faculty of initiative; they would naturally extend to political problems the methods by which they had conquered other more matter-of-fact difficulties. Their independent temper, their strong will, gave them an individualistic bent; their positive turn of mind, their knowledge of business, fortified in them the utilitarian instincts of the race. In them expanded perhaps the most essential tendencies, at any rate the most widespread ones, of the English genius: the practical, concrete, realistic tendencies. They were to set the stamp of their idiosyncrasies on the new society that was the outcome of their triumph, on modern England; and subsequently the contrary, complementary influence of other needs and other instincts was to smooth down that stamp without erasing it.

But chiefly, the industrial and trading middle class carried in itself the motive power of all

Digitized by Google

reforms; it felt the want of, and had a preference for, efficient organizations—not from systematic views, but from the teaching of experience. It was galled by the burden of routine, and so destined to alleviate it. In these men the economic revolution had focused its power of initiative and enterprise; they had acquired the sense of improved methods from the use of machinery. Determined on getting elbow-room in the society where they found no breathing-space, they were to dare impose a more rational order upon it, so as to gain their proper place in it. As much imbued as the members of any other class with the matter-of-fact habits of the English mind, as strongly opposed to the disinterested play of ideas, they more fully realized the modern necessities of life, and were to rise above temporary adjustments to make empiricism into a coherent whole. It was from them that there rose in England, either directly or through the intermediary of theories, the first wave of political and social rationalism; they were the source of meditated adaptation.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

DOCTRINES

I. Rationalism and empiricism in English history.—II. The utilitarian philosophy: the political theory of democracy.—III. The economics of individualism: the Free Trade movement.—IV. Darwinism and evolutionism: the theory of adaptation.—V. Religious rationalism: Broad Church and agnosticism.

I

WHAT is commonly called the advent of English democracy—that is to say, the accession to power of the middle classes and the extension of the franchise to the people, coincided with a widespread philosophical and political movement, rational and liberal in tendency, which justified that evolution, or at least created around it a favourable atmosphere. With this movement were connected nearly all the doctrines, the main principle of which was a clearer organization of ideas or facts. To this, therefore, can be attributed one whole aspect of modern England,—if not the most important one, at least that by which she is most easily differentiated from her older state.

No doubt the application of reason to moral and social problems is not necessarily bound up with the advent of democracy; it can be traced much further back in England than the nineteenth cen-

Digitized by Google

tury. Yet one can discover a connection, as early as the preceding centuries, between the rise of the middle class, the first phase in the development of modern society, and the spreading of rationalist doctrines; in 1688, the English merchants, who played a leading part in the restoration of public liberties, found themselves in natural agreement with the ideas of Locke, just as the manufacturers of 1832 thought it expedient to follow the guidance of Bentham. Again, the first endeavours of modern philosophy in England, the doctrines of Bacon and Locke, had been instinct with an empirical spirit; experience was their guide, the source from which they constantly drew, and it has been possible to point them out as the fittest illustration of the experimental tendencies of the English mind. But the empiricism of Locke is one thing, and the impassioned preference of a Burke for instinctive adaptation is another. Whatever may be the regard shown by the former for the sovereign right of things as they are, however cautious he may prove in his study of possible reforms, he allows thought to bring some order into facts, provided their unconquerable necessities are acknowledged, and all their data taken into account. By refining on mere empiricism, Bacon and Locke diverged from intellectual routine, from pure and simple submission to nature and history; they opened the way for the attempts of reason to correct or change what exists. So far they were essentially different from Burke, a genuine representative of uncompromising empiricism.

Digitized by Google

So the rationalistic liberalism which took the lead in the formation of modern England was rooted on English soil in an already ancient philosophic tradition. It was, on the other hand, connected with a network of European causes and influences; like French rationalism, it can be traced back to the Renaissance; the mind freed from its old fetters was destined to find in itself the light that gives the world its coherent intelligibility. This result was achieved in France by the doctrine of Descartes as early as the seventeenth century. The English genius, more positive, better aware of natural necessities, reached it later and only by degrees. Bacon and Locke stated the theory of empiricism—that is to say, formulated the laws which man must obey in order to rule over nature. By criticizing the theory of innate ideas, Locke overthrew the belief in a divinely established harmony between man's mind and the universe, and thus opened for us the possibility of imparting to the universe a new order, the source of which is in ourselves. About the middle of the eighteenth century, the psychological rhythm of English thought, at one with the European rhythm, showed an indisputable predominance of the intellectual faculties over the sensitive ones; it was the era of "philosophy," the time of "enlightenment," when literature, art, religion and life were, or tried to be, reasonable.

A synthesis of all those elements was to be found in the wave of theoretical and practical rationalism usually called the utilitarian movement. With Hume, Adam Smith, Priestley, and

Digitized by Google

the English disciples of the French Revolution, Paine and Godwin, intellectualism combined with hopes of political and social progress reached the dawn of the Romantic Movement, that great swing of the moral pendulum by which the balance was restored and the sensibility given its due. With Bentham and the Benthamites, rationalism outlived the romantic reaction, and, after Waterloo, came in contact with a new generation, reassured but secretly uneasy, ripe for reforms which no revolutionary scare could longer delay. From Bentham and his disciples were derived the various forms of liberalism and rational philosophy of the nineteenth century.

II

In the forefront of the intellectual forces which moulded modern England stands a liberal, individualistic and democratic movement,—the utilitarian philosophy and political economy. Though their influence is not so much felt in the England of to-day, these doctrines nevertheless react indirectly on the circumstances of the present time. The waves they diffused over the century still bathe the foundations of modern England, under new names and by distant derivations. This is, then, the place to trace their main currents.

The utilitarian philosophy was based on the positive and realistic instincts of the English mind. But it further developed these tendencies, pushed them to their utmost limit, and finally to a

Digitized by Google

contradiction: it linked into a systematic whole elements the special value of which was their concreteness and pliancy. That is how, whilst at bottom in harmony with the genius of the race, it came at one time to be opposed to it. For its fortune was due to exceptional circumstances, to the predominance of the need for analysis and rational organization which accompanied the victory of the middle classes. Helped on by the current of social evolution, it imparted a doctrine, principles and a renewed vigour to the old empirical liberalism then exhausted by its long-deferred and incomplete triumph; for the routine of the Whigs it substituted philosophical radicalism; for the vague tendencies of industrial individualism it found a justification in political economy.

The Utilitarians had hardly any metaphysics; chiefly intent on practical problems, they applied their endeavours to the sciences of man—psychology, ethics, law, economy. One spirit pervades all these doctrines. The English rationalism which corresponded, about 1820, to the French philosophy of the eighteenth century differed from its predecessor, whose heir it is in so many respects, by its more exclusively positive character. The question is, how to establish the happiness of mankind, for all pure speculation is futile. Now, the science of the relations between men implies the knowledge of the individual; and Bentham's politics are based on his ethics, which in their turn are based on his psychology. Everybody knows the main lines of this concatenation of ideas, one of the clearest and

Digitized by Google

most systematic that English thought has produced. There is not in man any irreducible spiritual activity, any absolute or transcendent self, any innate idea; taking up the task begun by Locke, and continued by Hume and Priestley, Bentham and James Mill bring it to completion; they point out the mechanism through which, from elementary sensation, are derived the so-called higher activities of the mind. Perceptions are combined according to the laws of mental association: the laws of contiguity, resemblance and contrast; and the most complex operations of the intellect can be reduced to these simple elements.

In the same way, the pursuit of pleasure is for every man a primary necessity, and, so to speak, a reflex action; good will thus consist in seeking one's true pleasure, or real interest; evil, in seeking false ones. Ethics will be the arithmetic of pleasures. Which are not only the most intense, but the most lasting, the most easily renewed? Those, surely, which pertain less to the senses than to the mind. Interest well understood thus leads man to find his own delight in that of others; and altruism is the outcome of egotism. Human appetites are like elemental forces, whose interaction, enlightened by reason, must mechanically produce moral harmony; the chief task of the moralist is to teach men the calculation which must guide their conduct; the sum total of all these individual computations will be for society as a whole the highest possible net product. The subsequent efforts of the utilitarian moralists were

Digitized by Google

to aim at making nicer distinctions between pleasures, and at bringing their hierarchy into closer agreement with that which the human conscience has established among disinterested gratifications.

Thus will the interest of all spring from everybody's personal satisfaction; and, indeed, the interest of all is the supreme good of the State. The greatest happiness of the greatest number, such is the true principle of government. And so democracy, or at least political equality, results from utilitarian logic as applied to human policy. For what is monarchy? The exclusive rule of one self-seeking man; the function of the sovereign is vitiated in its essence, and corrupts the society over which he reigns. Aristocracy is the régime in which one class pursues its own interest at the expense of the public good; the traditional management of the commonwealth in England, according to Bentham and his friends, affords a sad example of this political absurdity. On the contrary, democracy is in conformity with reason; each man naturally seeking his own best good, the government of all will seek that of all; or rather, as unanimity is not often realized, the rule of the majority is the best possible approach to social justice. Reformers must strive to organize such a system.

On the narrow foundation of those simple principles and arguments was erected in England, about 1820, the rational fabric called philosophic Radicalism. It was conspicuous by its pronounced opposition to the habits of the English mind. No political doctrine had ever before assumed such

Digitized by Google

a clear-cut expression in its postulates, such a strict form in its deductions. It constituted a typical programme of meditated readjustment. Favoured by social circumstances, by the intellectual needs of the time, it met, about 1830, with extraordinary success. Spread by clubs, magazines, lectures, the propagandism of energetic young men, it gave a theoretical justification to the longing for reform with which public opinion was astir. But it did not survive the incomplete victory of 1832; running counter as it did, with its rigorous intellectualism, to the instinct for compromise inherent in the English temperament, it lost all influence on the day when vanished its transitory harmony with the essential interests of an intensely active class. Diffused thenceforth, popularized and toned down, it merged into the Liberalism of the Manchester school; and its vigorous, uncompromising method lay dormant, to awake only at the end of the century, under the stimulus of new social needs. It none the less gave its stamina to middle-class criticism of existing conditions, and fortified the liberal doctrines, which but for it would have remained purely empirical.

About 1860, the philosophical tradition within Liberalism was represented by John Stuart Mill. With him political science increased in breadth and complexity; adhering to the general views of his predecessors, he yet reacted against the too simple abstraction of their formulæ. For the "geometrical" method of his father, James Mill, he substituted the historical or "*a posteriori* deductive" method; on the data of history

Digitized by Google

empirical generalizations were grounded, and these were verified by being deduced from the laws of human nature previously stated. One can perceive here the influence of Comte, whose positivism was then gaining a footing in England, and of that new spirit of scientific objectivity which characterizes the middle period of the century. In the field of practice, John Stuart Mill chiefly emphasized the advantages of liberty; he strove to extend the bounds of the domain left to individual initiative, and thus to arrest the downward progress towards tyranny of the now inevitable democracy. An ever-ready attention to the rights of the minority, a broad intellectual tolerance, an ever-watchful distrust of the encroachments of the State upon private consciences, were thenceforward essential traits of the political attitude of the Liberal doctrinaires. The influence of Spencer was to harmonize with theirs; he too was to set up the individual versus the State in a famous book; and English Liberalism was to preserve this negative standpoint till the crisis which about the end of the century awoke it to the vital necessity of a change.

III

At the same time that the political problem was being freely discussed, philosophers passed on to the social problem. For two centuries already English thinkers had been attracted by the mysterious laws of the prosperity of nations. But modern political economy, created between 1750 and 1800

Digitized by Google

by the French "physiocrats" and Adam Smith, assumed the character of a science, and was made into a body of strict reasonings, during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. It brought to the industrial and trading middle classes the intellectual support they needed to establish the freedom of production and trade.

The liberal or "orthodox" political economy, as it has been since called by the advocates of the interventionist or socialistic economy, combined with the utilitarian philosophy and Benthamism into a homogeneous whole. The same men, in many cases, were leaders of both movements; the two doctrines were united by natural affinities. Like Bentham's politics, Ricardo's economy is purely intellectual; it appeals only to reason, and leaves out intuition and feeling. Though both theories claimed to be based on experience, and were indeed imbued with a strong positive and realistic tendency, they deviated from pure objectivity and put on an abstract and deductive character. Both expressed the individualistic and critical effort of the middle classes, for a time checked in their advance by the vestiges of the ancient empirical order. Political economy rose against mediæval routine and protectionist regulations as eagerly as the science of politics against the privileges of the ruling aristocracy. So the system elaborated, or rather perfected, by Ricardo became part and parcel of the "philosophic" Radicalism of 1830. When public favour forsook the philosophic Radicals, and all influence slipped from their hands, their economic watchwords

Digitized by Google

survived them, and supplied the Liberalism of the Manchester school with its dogmas.

Each of the masters had contributed his part to the body of doctrines held in common. Adam Smith had formulated the theory of value; he had thrown light on the increase in production under the rule of the division of labour, at the very time when factories and works were carrying further the application mills had made of this system; he had enunciated the famous maxim of *laisser-faire*, dealing decisive blows to the interventionist and protectionist system still in favour, and pointing out the advantages of unrestrained freedom in production and exchange. After him, Malthus had studied the possible consequences of over-population, at the very time when modern industry was raising its first human harvests on English ground. Ricardo lastly, making these ideas into a system, had added to them his own theory of rent, and had grappled with the problem of the distribution of wealth. The doctrine was then constituted in its essential and definitive elements. The strenuous propaganda by means of which the disciples—James Mill, MacCulloch, Nassau Senior—spread it far and wide from 1820 to 1850, did not materially add to it. John Stuart Mill, though in close touch with the utilitarian and liberal traditions, was the first to try and infuse a new spirit into economy; but in spite of his attempt, the classical views were to hold their ground almost unchanged to the end of the century.

Ricardo's system is a theory of individualism. He chose to consider as natural necessities the

Digitized by Google

social conditions created by industrial competition. Society thus appeared as an aggregate of individuals, exactly similar to atomic elements endowed with a constantly operating force, the pursuit of their interests; with entire mobility, thanks to the breaking of the fetters by which the old regulations hampered the free circulation of men and goods; with a faculty of discerning their proper advantage substantially equal in all. Now, those atoms are not whirling in empty space; they cannot leave the surface of the earth, the necessary plane of all human activity and the only source of all nourishment. Therefore the ownership and cultivation of land are the primary condition of social life, and the most essential privilege. As for the origin of private property in land, it is not discussed: the proprietorship of a few is a fact. And thus is at once determined the social order; three classes are now distinguishable: the landowners; the traders and manufacturers, who manipulate the produce of the soil, transform or exchange it, thanks to the possession of capital; and lastly the wage-earners, who by their work create the value of things. For the value of an object is measured, not by its price, but by the quantity of human work involved in it. The fortune of this last theory is well known; it was to supply Marx with the starting-point of his doctrine of surplus-value, and orthodox German collectivism was thus to build up its main theoretical contention with English materials, as well as to illustrate its description of the capitalistic order with English facts.

But a disturbing agent interferes with the working of the economic mechanism just constituted:

Digitized by Google

population increases at a quicker rate than the production of food; the former in a geometrical progression, Malthus had said, the latter in an arithmetical one. Vainly has nature tried to forestall this danger: hunger, disease, war, are unable to check the undesirable swarming of the industrial class; the will of man must intervene; wisdom requires that all, especially the wage-earner, should marry late, and that one's family should not exceed one's income. In spite of this voluntary restriction, population will always tend to increase quicker than wealth and food; and thus, this peril being constantly realized, the phenomenon of rent will never fail to take place. As the mouths to feed are growing more numerous, it becomes necessary to till new lands, of necessity less fertile, the best soil having been everywhere first cultivated; and every time a zone of poorer ground is ploughed up round the older fields, the cost price of the produce in this border zone, higher than anywhere else, will spread level like a fluid over the selling prices through the whole land: for the law of the market is the equalization of selling prices for goods of the same kind, whatever their diverse origins; and thus the most costly cultivation, that of the newly broken grounds, will determine the amount of the benefit or rent for the more cheaply cultivated estates. And in that progress towards the distant but inevitable catastrophe of universal famine, the classes keeping their several attributes and functions, the distribution of wealth remaining the same, the privilege of owning land will be more and more rewarded,

Digitized by Google

rents will rise more and more; commercial profits will, on the contrary, get lower, under the pressure of machinery and competition; wages will rise slightly—less than the prices of goods. And so this vision of the future ends in gloom.

Political economy, however, is not only an explanation of the social mechanism, in its typical simplicity; at the time when it received its complete expression, it made a vigorous onslaught on such existing institutions as stopped or hampered the actual working of that mechanism. The philosophic Radicals of 1830 urged bitter grievances against the spirit of authority and intervention. With remarkable consistency they supported the protests of the first working men's unions against the Combination Laws, which prohibited such associations. They denounced the Statute of Apprentices, the old regulations which in every trade limited the number of probationers, and their time of service; the law of Settlement, by which the country labourer was bound to his parish; and the Poor Law, which acknowledged the right of the destitute to live, prevented the extinction of misery, and even encouraged it to multiply. On all these points they had already triumphed when Queen Victoria's reign began.

But the great economic achievement of the doctrinaire Liberals was Free Trade; and to accomplish it, they needed more protracted efforts, an alliance with all middle-class forces, and the concerted action of business men and philosophers. The name of the Manchester school is associated with

Digitized by Google

an agitation which deeply stirred the public mind; with the passing of a radical reform, justified in principle by theoretic proofs, as it was called for by conscious interests; with a patent example of meditated adaptation.

The men of Manchester were eminent representatives of one aspect of English politics and intellectual life about the middle of last century; they have even contributed essential features to the physiognomy of Liberal middle-class England down to the present time. With Cobden and Bright, the doctrines of the philosophic Radicals took a more decidedly practical turn; with them the objective realistic character of the normal English mind grew predominant again. They abode by the principles of classical economy; but they dwelt more willingly on their application. Belonging to the industrial class, they spontaneously shared its instincts, tendencies and tastes; they stood out as the champions of a cause, the leaders of a party, the examples of a moral and social type. Their clear-sighted activity, their perspicuous thinking, their firm grasp of realities, their energy and perseverance, were akin at the same time to the average qualities of the English race, in its traditional robustness, and to the new faculties developed among the factory owners and business men by the necessities of production and exchange. They reveal the depth of the moral transformation which was bending the empirical habits of English thought towards a bolder and more logical exercise of initiative, in both the practical and intellectual fields.

Digitized by Google

The history of the Free Trade movement is well known. It raised, about 1840, modern England against the England of the past; the impatient masses of the middle class against the haughty caste of the landlords. The immediate cause of the struggle was the protectionist system, and more particularly the Corn Laws; but the issues were wider: the nobility were fighting for their political influence, as well as for their economic privileges. To justify the artificial raising of the price of bread, they did not lack reasons to put forth: it was with taxes levied on their incomes that England had led Europe against Napoleon; a national compensation was due to them; moreover, the decay of English agriculture would leave the economic life of the country at the mercy of foreign nations. The men of Manchester, on the contrary, instinct with a philanthropic zeal, opened prosperous and peaceful, almost internationalist, prospects. They dreamt of a universal commonwealth based on commerce, on free relations between states, and on a constant exchange of commodities and ideas. Temperate dreams indeed, still fraught with wisdom and clear-sightedness, grounded on a positive sense of realities; but dreams in which their reason grew impassioned and ranged far and wide, losing sight of actual difficulties.

One should not forget that some class-interest lay unquestionably at the bottom of their action; when Cobden and Bright demanded the suppression of taxes on foreign goods, they promoted the cause of the manufacturers, as low wages depended

Digitized by Google

on cheap food. In the contest of the landlords with the "cotton lords" there came clearly to light that struggle of the country gentry and the agricultural interest with the employers of labour which has been ever since a more or less general trait of political life in the advanced nations of Europe, and which is but an episode in the war of classes. Again, the Manchester men abated nothing of their corporate middle-class feeling in their dealings with the wage-earners; English Socialists have not forgiven them their dogmatic, stubborn opposition to the beginnings of factory legislation. But with all their limitations, they were fine specimens of British energy; and in the great business centres, to this day, their spirit and memory have survived.

After 1846, the fight was decided in favour of Free Trade. All England soon rallied to that judgment of fate; national prosperity, indeed, justified it and seemed to raise it above criticism. For fifty years the Liberal creed in commercial matters met with no substantial opposition, and English economic activity based a tranquil self-confidence on its splendid achievements. With the end of the century awoke once more the problem which had been considered as for ever solved.

IV

Between classical economy and Darwinism the affinities are profound, and the transition is easy. Both are the rational theory of an actual condition

Digitized by Google

of things, and of a condition of war; both derive from mournful statements of facts a spirit of optimism, or at least scientific equanimity; both vindicate the triumph of the strong, and agree with the instinctive aspirations of a thriving class or a vigorous society. In tender souls, in religious minds, they were calculated to arouse, and have in fact aroused, an identical feeling of aversion; both doctrines, on the contrary, could equally appeal to lucid cold thinkers on the ground of their realistic objectivity. No doubt Darwinism has, better than economy, withstood the impassioned attacks which were levelled at them on every side; they belong none the less to the same current of thought; they answer to the same craving for intellectual systematization. One must only bear in mind that the investigation on which the inductions of Darwin the naturalist were grounded was immeasurably more thorough than the economic knowledge on which Ricardo the financier had built up his system. In fact, a connecting link, from the beginning, united evolutionism to political economy. The transformist doctrine grew in Darwin's mind from an attempt to verify the teaching of Malthus. The notion of a struggle for food between over-numerous human mouths is to be found again in the wider conception of the struggle for life; and the consequences Malthus had indicated, the defensive "checks" he had counselled, were reactions similar to those through which, in the animal world, living beings adapt themselves to their conditions of existence.

Adaptation is indeed, as everybody knows, one

Digitized by Google

of the great biological facts the importance of which has been illustrated and made popular by Darwin's transformism and Spencer's evolutionism. From this point of view, the favour these theories have met with among the English is of peculiar significance. No intellectual influence has been more effective in bringing up from the unconscious to a more conscious plane the instinctive reactions and empirical processes through which traditional England had adjusted herself to the successive necessities of life. By pointing out and formulating the principles of these reactions, by showing them at the very source of vital success in the lives of all beings, either individual or collective, evolutionism has for ever destroyed the happy ignorance which formerly allowed the slow, calm progression and blind infallibility of English readjustments. The very method of instinct, by growing conscious, has ceased to be purely instinctive, and a process which preserved the pliancy of elementary vital actions has assumed the rigidity of a system.

Burke had already seriously impaired the efficiency of English political empiricism by probing its spirit, describing its method and proclaiming its superhuman value with religious zeal and dogmatism; his analysis had let the baneful light of reflection into dark depths which owed their fecundity only to their darkness. Over and over again, during the nineteenth century, the theory of organic growth was put forward by historians, philosophers, and sociologists to explain the English social order; and whilst the clear

Digitized by Google

realization of that instinctive process somewhat hampered its free play, criticism springing from the very feeling of admiration was led to dangerous comparisons between the successful routine and other possible methods. The mystery of the divine fortune of the English genius, stripped of its veils, could no longer check with awe the impatient spirits chafing at its tardy operations; and reason, encouraged to try and understand all, was emboldened to rule everything. Widely diffused, the explanation of the English political tradition, in its elementary simplicity, has not served the cause of this tradition. And more than any other, the evolutionist doctrine, by laying stress on the working of universal adaptation, has tended to make it everywhere more self-conscious and meditated.

Evolutionism is a complete theory of the universe; and like all English doctrines, even the most realistic ones, like political economy from which it is derived, it aims at laying down practical principles and reacting upon what exists. This tendency is chiefly conspicuous in the disciples of Darwin. The personal contribution of the great naturalist is well known. Applying to the study of general biology his admirable scientific qualities, his fund of precise observation, his unequalled gift of concrete perception, all the perseverance and obstinacy of the English genius, he established the intuitions of Lamarck on a firm definitive basis. Species were shown to be variable; the passage from one to the other was explained by natural selection; and all the

Digitized by Google

elements of life, in the constantly flowing stream of phenomena, were united by a complex interdependence.

With Spencer, transformism is but one portion of a total synthesis, a scientific history of the world. His doctrine is not properly metaphysical; it asserts the relativity of knowledge, and stops on the verge of the unknowable. All transcendent research is futile; and with the coming of the new industrial age man has lost his persistent faith in dogmatic religions or philosophies. The religious feeling, however, will not die out; it is not starved, but fed by the vast hypotheses in which the thinker's mind soars up to the sublimity of the universe; it will find its outlet in the silent worship of the divine Unknown. But keeping within the limits thus set by nature, scientific investigation can fully encompass its object, and reach the supreme end it has always kept in view: the unification of all laws. Fusing into one the three main generalizations human thought had evolved, the system of universal gravitation, the law of the conservation of energy, and the nebular hypothesis, Spencer incorporates them into his own theory of evolution. From the nebula to the present order of the universe, primitive energy has kept organizing itself according to the principle of gravitation, and its manifold changes have not altered its invariable quantity. Matter, the outcome of the condensation of energy, has kept integrating itself from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous and from the indefinite to the finite. And in the domains of all particular sciences,

Digitized by Google

astronomy, geology, biology, psychology, sociology, the same principle suffices to reduce the complexity of phenomena to a regular and clear rhythm of stability and change.

That synthesis may have lost something of its apparent validity during the last fifty years. The immediate possibility of a mechanical explanation of the universe, apart from the further progress of special sciences, is no longer readily accepted by cautious minds; on many points, the relations Spencer had established between phenomenal changes and the general formulæ of evolution now seem over-simplified to us. But if we have outlived the evolutionist idea as a total and definitive expression of scientific philosophy, it remains an essential element of contemporary English thought, one of the most plausible sketches of the history of the world, and an almost always fruitful germ of theories and hypotheses. It can be found in scholarly or literary works, in moral or social disquisitions, in the watchwords of statesmen. It has insensibly and deeply modified the very foundations of thought, has introduced the notion of universal change into the least conscious habits of reflection.

However, its influence over official philosophy, religious dogmas, professed principles of conduct, has not been proportionate to its overwhelming predominance in the intellectual field. For it roused passionate opposition from the very first. The theory of the animal descent of man had brought widespread notoriety to Darwin; Spencer's attempt to drive back the supernatural into the

Digitized by Google

dim regions of the unknowable, and to extend the sway of the mechanical over all existence, was met by the open hostility of all the forces of faith and moral conservatism. It was only by degrees that emotional and idealistic tendencies, religious beliefs, the timidity of thinkers and of the larger public, could be reconciled with the new light which cast a strange unexpected intelligibility over the past and the future of the world. In England, as elsewhere, the common ways of thinking and of feeling have accepted the evolutionist idea by means of a gradual assimilation, a slow adaptation. More elastic than Roman Catholic dogmas, the articles of the Protestant faith could easily enough yield to this inevitable modification. The bold attempt of Darwin and Spencer to unify the living and cosmic universe, and to account for it without the help of transcendental faith, was still responsible for one of the greatest shocks the English mind felt in its deeper subconsciousness during the nineteenth century. That supreme effort of rational thought contributed, more than any other doctrine, to create an atmosphere of dry, cold, scientific clear-sightedness, in which the conscience of England could not long breathe; and it was to a large extent instrumental in bringing about the "revenge of instinct."

Whilst evolutionism was opposed to the emotional needs of the English mind, it agreed with its practical tendencies. More precisely, its inner impulse harmonized with the intellectual aspirations and economic wants of the new society. It conferred the sanction of philosophy on the

Digitized by Google

political changes by which the middle class had been adapting the old order to its own new power. It supported the contention of the Radicals and the economists, who claimed to consider the mechanical processes of production as constituting a social progress in themselves, and affording at least the means of a moral progress. Spencer's writings put forward the theoretic justification of the industrial age; like the Manchester men, he considers it as a decisive stage in the development of civilization, as the definitive advent of Liberalism and peace.

On the other hand, his social doctrine is aimed against the encroachments of the State. In the abstract, evolutionism might just as well lead to constructive conclusions as to individualistic ones; it finds solidarity at the core of things, and by laying stress on the idea that progress consists in increasing complexity, it might conduce to develop further the functions of that organism the State. But impelled by some elements in the logical concatenation of his system, and no doubt by his own temperament as well, Spencer put the emphasis on his denunciation of State tyranny. He refused the central power that gradual extension of its social and economic activities by means of which England was already trying to repress industrial anarchy. So far, again, evolutionism agreed with the preferences and interests of middle-class Liberalism; and Spencer's arguments were, down to the end of the century, the backbone of the old-fashioned Liberals' opposition to the advance of State intervention.

Digitized by Google

V

The philosophy of Spencer stopped on the border of the unknowable. It was thus one of the symptoms, as well as one of the causes, of the critical movement called agnosticism. Along with this movement we may treat of the various forms of religious liberalism and rationalism during the nineteenth century.

Protestantism in England had, better than in Germany, withstood the dogmatic disintegration whose principle it carries within itself. Not so fond as German thought of abstract speculation, and fitter for those illogical compromises which traditionally secured its balance, English thought triumphantly reconciled private investigation with the authority of certain articles of faith. No doubt Protestant individualism had asserted itself in England quite as much as anywhere else; since the Reformation, since the prolonged transition from Catholicism to Anglicanism during the latter half of the sixteenth century, and since the Elizabethan religious settlement, a large portion of the people had sought for peace of conscience outside the Established Church. The sects had multiplied; after their swarming at the time of the Commonwealth, the Restoration and scepticism had not been able to quench the Puritan enthusiasm with which the "non-conformists" were instinct; and by the side of the Roman Catholics, yet tainted with civil inferiority, the eighteenth century had witnessed the rise of the

Digitized by Google

Methodists, who divided themselves before long into rival denominations. About 1830, the dissensions between sects were as marked as ever in England, pointing rather to the vitality than to the decay of the religious spirit.

But those dissensions were more often due to social and emotional oppositions, to an unequal pitch of mystical fervour, than to intellectual differences. It is not in the rational field that the struggle for influence is waged among English sects. The higher culture, habits of logical thinking and historical discussion are almost exclusively to be found in Anglican divines; and these were then sheltered from the dangerous, fearless initiatives of thought by a wise passiveness. Satisfied with the soundness of their dogmatic position, protected against the vapid polemics of the eighteenth-century deists by the deductions of Butler and Paley, they but dimly caught a distant echo of German exegetics. The only symptom of life the Church then showed was the evangelical movement, by means of which the stirring impulse propagated among Dissenters by Methodism was extended to the Anglican clergy.

About 1850, on the contrary, the Established Church was imbued with a new life. The Oxford revival had called forth a defensive reaction in her, whilst she was being permeated by it. The three tendencies which still prevail to-day within the Establishment became then more pronounced. The "low Church" partook of the austere spirit of the non-conformists, and maintained the principle of Protestant exclusiveness in its integrity.

Digitized by Google

The "high Church" rather inclined to the hierarchical and gorgeous forms of Roman Catholic worship, and showed that retrogressive leaning which has led back so many religious souls, for the last half-century, towards the principle of spiritual authority. To these two tendencies, inherited from the preceding age, was then added a third one, that of the "broad Church," which brought together the critical minds, anxious to reconcile reason with faith. From both the historical and the logical points of view, it was the development of the Broad Church party which preceded and caused the unexpected growth of the older High Church in a time of scientific scepticism. The Oxford Movement, the beginning of the Catholic revival within Anglicanism and outside its pale, was called to life by the first symptoms of that spirit which about 1830 was known by the name of "Liberalism," and was soon to become the Broad Church and agnosticism.

Many were the origins of this moral attitude. Successive tributaries swelled the stream of religious rationalism. The small school of the Benthamites had propagated philosophic doubt around them, and the Radicals boldly demanded Church disestablishment. On the other hand, the Unitarians, a small sect as well, but composed of cultivated families, from which distinguished thinkers would often spring, represented a line of thought less negative, but independent, and derived from the disciples of Arianism. Shortly after 1830, the works of the German critics began to make their way to England; Baur and Strauss were translated. The translator of the latter's

Digitized by Google

Life of Christ, George Eliot, personified another current of foreign influence, the positivist ideas. She was deeply impressed by the religious philosophy of Auguste Comte; she eagerly adopted its negations, and its constructive part as well, the religion of humanity. Gathered round Frederic Harrison, a small group were to preserve that influence and continue that tradition to the end of the century.

About 1860, such men as Lewes, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, belonging to widely different regions of the intellectual world, professing different beliefs, found themselves at one in their attitude of reserve towards dogmatic religions. Agnosticism was, like similar philosophies of the Continent, an outcome of the antagonism between modern criticism and faith. But though its tendency was negative, it was not markedly aggressive; the effect of the general environment, the atmosphere of relative tolerance in which religious discussions are kept in England, blunted the destructive edge of English rationalism in its bearing upon dogma; whilst the tone of social life, the respect universally felt for moral conventions, weakened its force of expansion. Therefore this form of rationalism failed to exert the same influence on society at large as that which the Radical politicians or Liberal economists had secured for themselves. A refined scepticism, limited to a select group of thinkers and scientists, its sphere of action was then but narrow. The time had not come yet when were to converge, thanks to the advance in public education, such phenomena as the downward

Digitized by Google

diffusion of scientific criticism, and the gradual breaking away from all religious observance of an ever-increasing number of minds in every class of society. Pretty general in Europe, this process is taking place in England, at the present time, more slowly than anywhere else.

Not so radical as agnosticism, and keeping within the bounds of positive religion, the Broad Church showed yet similar tendencies. It represented the attempt of sincere believers to reconcile their reason and their faith. These men were anxious to gather into a body all active well-meaning persons, engrossed like themselves by the moral and social problems of an unsettled age; they wished to give up the rigorous enforcement of dogma, to unite all the members of the Protestant family in a wider creed. Stanley, Jowett, Kingsley, Maurice, were instinct with the same zeal. Maurice was the leader; in his writings the views of the "Latitudinarian" school were clearly expressed. With him, original sin and the fall of man are no longer those supreme facts which the Protestant tradition considered as the essential elements in the destiny of man; they are only incidents in a moral development which starts from weakness and error. The Atonement is no longer the necessary redemption of a crime, but the purification of sinful mankind. The everlasting life, as Christ described it, is not the realm of material punishments and rewards which a still pagan imagination has called forth. The ever-living, ever-present personality of Christ, such is the centre of belief and religious life; all that conveys His personality and faithfully expresses it, is a

Digitized by Google

means of truth and salvation; all that obscures it or tries to supplant it, is a source of error. The claim of the Bible itself and of the Church is made good only by their usefulness as instruments of Christ.

Those ideas, widely accepted to-day, still came as a shock in England about the middle of the last century. The bold initiative of several Broad Churchmen in political matters, the Christian Socialism of Maurice and Kingsley, must be historically and psychologically connected with the other main aspect of English evolution—with the "revenge of instinct." But to scared middle-class minds, religious liberalism and social philanthropy appeared as the inseparable expressions of one rash dangerous spirit. On the whole, the rationalism of latitudinarians, the scepticism of agnostics, the criticism of exegetists, contributed to drive back the English sensibility to the simpler and more spontaneous forms of faith as well as of life. The publication of *Essays and Reviews*, theological disquisitions inspired with a spirit of innovation, in 1860, and the famous case of Bishop Colenso, who about the same time defended audacious propositions, were among the symptoms of that crisis. Thenceforth the religious problem showed in England, as in Germany or France, all the urgent, painful character it derives from the modern conflict between exegetics and faith. And in England, as elsewhere, more perhaps than anywhere else, one of the solutions given to this problem was to be the assertion that faith is superior to science, and belongs to another order than reason.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

LAWS AND MANNERS

I. The Reform Acts; the democratic movement; the evolution of parties; Liberals and Conservatives; the mechanism of government; the authority of the Crown.—II. Liberal logic and the reform of English administration; the modern evolution of social life.—III. The new manners and the influence of the middle class; public opinion; literature.—IV. The waning of middle-class initiative.

SWAYED by the economic and social forces the industrial revolution had let loose, and by the theories which expressed reason's attempt to understand and organize reality better, English society underwent important changes in its structure and life. From 1830 to 1884, political power changed hands, the balance of government was shifted, the administrative system was developed; new manners prevailed, and, permeated by this atmosphere, literature, the arts and all the higher activities, were brought into harmony with it. A democratic evolution, the wiping out of some abuses, a better adjustment of means to ends in all the social mechanism, the triumph of middle-class spirit and art, followed close upon the advent of new classes, and constituted a first adaptation of national life as a whole to modern facts and necessities.

Digitized by Google

I

The English constitution has grown democratic without a revolution, and by degrees. The three successive Reform Acts (1832, 1867, 1884) point none the less to a political evolution bolder and quicker than the previous history of England would have allowed one to expect.

The Reform Act of 1832 was by no means a radical measure. It deprived the most scandalously "rotten" boroughs of their representatives, and conferred them on the big industrial towns; in the country it gave the franchise to peasants owning an income of ten pounds; in the towns, to householders paying the same amount in rent. All told, there were less than 500,000 voters under the new regulation. But its import was decisive. Making the first breach in the stronghold of English oligarchy, it prepared and foretold the unavoidable victory of numbers. Long delayed by the impassioned opposition of conservative instincts, hailed by popular agitators as the dawn of a better era, it bestowed political power, in fact, upon the higher middle class. The Act of 1867 did extend the basis of government to a democratic breadth. In the towns, it granted the franchise to all tax-payers; in the country, it lowered the standard required by the 1832 Act. The urban working classes were thus allowed to make their political influence felt. The extension of the same privilege to the country people could no longer be prevented; in 1884, this stage was reached; almost

Digitized by Google

universal suffrage thenceforth prevailed in England. Only paupers, tramps, and a few orders of citizens deprived of their civil rights are excluded from it. Yet the electoral system, after this measure, still lay open to the criticisms of the Radicals; at the present day, they demand the suppression of some irregularities and of plural voting; and everybody knows what eager controversies the question of feminine suffrage is raising.

Thus has the political balance been shifted in England. The predominant influence, in the selection of national representatives, has passed from an oligarchy—the nobility and gentry—to the middle class, and then to the whole people. But this transference of power has been gradually effected; it has allowed the privilege of each dispossessed class to subsist and linger through the domination of the class newly called to power. The prestige of the aristocracy has remained very great; supreme in matters of taste and in social life their authority is felt in the direction of public affairs also, even outside the hereditary chamber in which the conservative tradition is perpetuated. It was only at a very recent date that the unavoidable conflict between Lords and Commons became acute. In the same way, it would be misleading to say that the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 have placed political omnipotence in the hands of the lower classes. The spirit of the English democracy from the very first proved moderate and respectful of tradition. Thanks to the weight of ancient habits, to the

Digitized by Google

economic strength of the wealthy classes, and to the fact that the higher or lower middle classes come in contact with the people at many points and shade off into it, the focus of political power is not placed among the workers of the field, the factory or the shop, but among the superintendents of their labour—substantial farmers, tradesmen, employers. It is to the middle rank, in a word, that the extension of the franchise has imparted political supremacy; and down to the present time, this supremacy might seem undisputed.

On several occasions, however, popular grievances emphasized the problem of national representation, with uncompromising vigour. The advent of English democracy was not altogether quiet and peaceful; and if the forces making for prudence and equilibrium have always conquered, it has not been without a struggle. The years 1830–32 were a disturbed, almost revolutionary period. In order to overcome the resistance of the Lords, to secure the passing of the Reform Bill, the theories of the philosophic Radicals and the complaints of the manufacturers needed the support of a European crisis—the French Revolution of 1830 and its consequences—as well as the lasting impression left by the Bristol riots (1831) on the public imagination. From that time, all social hope was intimately connected with the desire for political justice, and through the masses was diffused the idea, dimly understood, that the expression of their collective will would be the best means to react upon their conditions of life.

After the measure so eagerly wished for had

Digitized by Google

deceived the fond hopes of the people, and the reformed Parliament had revealed its conservative bent, a movement of political and social vindication, Chartism, raised a portion of the nation, for ten years, against the established order. It sprang from the widespread industrial distress which reached its climax about 1842; from the grudge left in men's minds by the new timorousness of the triumphant middle class; from the agitation propagated through the lower classes by the first tentative trade-unions, by the exhortations of the Radical leaders, which still rang in their ears, and by the socialist doctrines which were then beginning to spread. Chartism was a dark muddy wave whose waters broke over English society in a confused transitory period. By the mystical enthusiasm with which it was permeated, by the intuitive nature of its claims, by the impassioned, inspired characters of several among its chiefs, it belonged to the other aspect of modern England, the reaction of instincts against reason. But the people's "Charter" was none the less a direct outcome of liberal agitation; and by demanding universal suffrage, the payment of members and annual Parliaments, the Chartists followed the lead of the Radical politicians, at one with such men as wished for a rational reorganization of political justice.

Weakened by inner dissensions, revived for a while by the European crisis of 1848, this movement was not to outlive it. After 1850, it vanished away. But its usefulness was to endure in the silent acquiescence of the ruling classes in

Digitized by Google

a new electoral reform; and the era of economic prosperity, of quiet national development upon which England then entered contributed to the same result by means of a general pacification of feelings. Some outbursts of popular anger and stormy meetings were yet necessary, in 1866–67, to overcome conservative misgivings and carry through the second Reform Bill. Thenceforth the transformation of the electoral system went on to its completion in a serene atmosphere of civic union, in which opposition itself grew milder and more easily reconciled. The self-satisfied optimism of the middle Victorian period easily forgot the disturbed beginnings of English democracy during the preceding age.

As the national will now shared more and more in the direction of public affairs, the mechanism of government was adapted to these new circumstances. The great political parties, after 1832, were modernized. The names of Whigs and Tories were fraught with antiquated associations; they evoked the memories of the eighteenth century, of intrigues between the leading families, of private competition, Court cabals, selfish struggles between the two portions of one oligarchy, both of them routine-ridden and conservative. New watchwords, suggestive of principles and not of ancient traditions, were needed for the ampler and graver problems raised by the industrial revolution, by the victory of the middle classes. The Whigs became Liberals, the Tories called themselves Conservatives. The alternation in power of the two parties kept its relative regularity; but the

Digitized by Google

tendencies they stood for grew more clearly defined, and the differences between them were more pronounced. These differences were to get gradually weaker again as years went by, down to the end of the century.

In Liberalism, the Whig spirit refreshed and renewed its temper; it assimilated something of the utilitarian doctrines and the Benthamite philosophy; it became a force making for rational progress and systematic reform, positive in political matters, rather negative in matters social, and always inclined to be critical and individualistic. In Conservatism, the Tory spirit was to be found again, with its eager devotion to the prestige of the Crown, its loyalty to the Church, its preference for the upholding of the existing order. But to these, new elements were added, completing and sometimes contradicting its bland respect for tradition: a shrewd realization of necessary changes, a constant anxiety to forestall political crises, a desire to allay revolutionary tendencies by timely concessions. Under the influence of the emotional reaction, the Conservative party obeyed the impulse given by a great statesman, Disraeli; it paid unsparing attention to social difficulties, and claimed to oppose a constructive ideal of patriarchal organic monarchy to the destructive anarchical aims of the Liberal party. This opposition was to grow particularly significant when a third party, that of labour, rose in the twentieth century.

As for the English constitution itself, it underwent no substantial change; but the precedents, ever supple and flexible, which constituted it were

Digitized by Google

adapted to new circumstances. The House of Commons more directly represented the nation; its power and privileges were still on the increase, whilst those of the hereditary Chamber insensibly declined. It was more and more clearly understood that money bills belonged to the exclusive competence of the Commons; ministers were responsible to them, and so conformed to the wishes of their majority. For the last time, in 1834, King William IV dismissed the Melbourne Ministry of his own accord; for the last time in the nineteenth century, in 1860, the Lords attempted to modify a Finance Bill. The predominance of the Commons was thenceforth the main principle of government; chosen from among the party in power, the Prime Minister was the true head of the executive. Great personalities, Disraeli, Gladstone, soon conferred the sanction of success on this more logical and clearer organization, this simpler working of the political mechanism; and the same England in which Pitt and Fox were formerly dependent on the favour of the monarch, witnessed the functioning of the parliamentary system in conditions outwardly analogous to those of the French Republic.

However, the authority of the Crown is not in the English democracy a mere survival of the past. On the contrary, during the last century it has resumed much of its strength and prestige. The Kings of the Hanoverian family, since 1714, had let all material influence over State affairs slip from their idle or unworthy hands; the tradition obtained that the King reigned but governed not;

Digitized by Google

irresponsible, the monarch partook neither of the risks nor of the privileges of power. The lowest ebb was reached by the English Crown in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. The reign of Victoria was the beginning of an evolution in the opposite direction. The bitterest foes of the authority of the sovereign were the great Whig families, the members of the oligarchy which during the eighteenth century practically ruled over English politics. The victory of the middle classes in the Reform Acts, by overthrowing caste government, has restored a wider and more direct contact between the sovereign and the nation at large. A popular King, in the constitutional régime of democratic England, is a power with which the elected or hereditary representatives of the country have to reckon.

The personal character of Queen Victoria, the dignity of her life, her political insight, did much to give these new conditions their full effect. The reign of Edward VII, as will be shown subsequently, continued and still further increased this revival of the prestige of the Crown. But among the causes of this change, besides social circumstances and the democratic evolution, other influences of a moral and intellectual kind should not be forgotten. The instinctive movement of emotional and imaginative reconstruction which has, during the last sixty years, reacted against individualistic rationalism, is the main source of social monarchy as well as of imperialism. It is to the revenge of instinct and to the doctrines which embody it—to the new Toryism of Disraeli

Digitized by Google

principally—that the restoration of the royal authority in the nineteenth century must be ascribed.

II

The great wave of theoretic and practical rationalism which submerged England about 1830 and slowly ebbed away till the end of the century, driven back by the hostile tide of instinct, has not only brought with it a readjustment of the political equilibrium and a readaptation of the mechanism of government to the new conditions. The whole social order was modified according to the same principles. From 1820 to 1870, the several provinces of administration, the criminal law, the great municipal or national functions were reorganized in agreement with the same tendencies. It was, so to speak, a clearing away of all the bushy undergrowth which the passive tradition of English empiricism had allowed to thrive. The task was urgently needed. Whilst modern industry, the new facilities afforded to traffic and trade, the rise of towns, the development of the middle class, had been everywhere diffusing a new atmosphere, the structure of society, about the time of the first Reform Act, was still essentially archaic. Dickens's novels give us an accurate picture of it; to the end of his life, the great novelist drew his material from the rich fund of observation he had stored in his youth, and he described a merry quiet England, following the tried paths, the homely ways of the eighteenth century. The same society is depicted

Digitized by Google

fices of Conservative empiricism have shown during the nineteenth century. An important aspect of instinctive adaptation, from this point of view, belongs in fact to meditated adaptation. The recent years have revealed to us how far this change could permeate the tactics of the party which boasted of being only guided by habits, and which to-day seems to own a method.

Immediately after 1832, the Liberal Parliament, returned under the Reform Act, put into practice the two main principles on which the electoral battle had been fought and won. Public relief to the needy had been organized, since the time of Elizabeth, under the presiding notion of the mutual dependence which, in the older society, linked classes and castes to one another. Deprived of all assistance by the scattering of religious orders, the poor had been committed to the care of their parishes. This system implied an acknowledged right to live; by its working, it inevitably put a premium on the perpetuation and propagation of misery. It was thus contrary to the individualistic spirit of classical economy, and to the recommendations of Malthus. The New Poor Law (1834) reorganized and systematized public assistance. Gathered in special asylums, where children and adults, men and women were kept apart, paupers were compelled to work, and their diet was made sparing enough not to encourage laziness. The workhouse had never been popular; thenceforth it was even less so, and this law has not a little contributed, ever since, to foster social rancour among the destitute.

Digitized by Google

The preceding year, slavery had been abolished in the English colonies. In 1835, the Municipal Corporations Act remodelled the administration of towns. It was the starting-point of the irresistible movement to which elected councils, the necessary instruments of the democratic life of modern human aggregates, owed their ever-increasing powers and authority during the nineteenth century. Instead of closed privileged bodies, self-recruiting, the corporations became direct expressions of local interests. The creation of county councils, in 1888, was the final stage in this development. At the same time there was a decline in the ancient influence of the Squire, usually a Justice, who formerly held in his own hands the civil and moral government of country districts; and English society started on its progress towards that extension of the paid bureaucracy and civil services which to-day characterizes it as well as all European nations. To the same spirit were due the postal reform, which instituted a uniform democratic tax instead of the costly complexity and injustice of the old system; the abolition, in 1871, of the purchase of military commissions, by which a better order was introduced into the selection and promotion of officers; and the Ballot Act of 1872.

As has been seen before, widely diverging interests and opposed doctrines were at the bottom of the agitation for the suppression of tariffs. The victory of Free Trade was the crowning triumph of the middle class; but so far as economic and political forces require the help of intellectual

Digitized by Google

forces to find both their expression and confirmation, it was a triumph for liberal logic and classical economy. Even before the Reform Act, Huskisson had begun relaxing the system of prohibitive duties. From 1838, the Anti-Corn Law League aimed at rousing public opinion against the privilege of landlords. In 1842, Peel, a Conservative minister, won over to the new ideas, commenced the reform of the tariff; he went on with it in 1845 and 1846; this last year saw the complete abolition of the Corn Laws. In 1852, Disraeli solemnly discarded the protectionist doctrine in the name of the Tory party.

With most of his political friends, this conversion was not so much an intellectual adhesion to principles, as the acknowledgment of a successful economic experiment. English prosperity, since 1842, had been constantly on the increase. Commerce, like industry, had been much benefited by Free Trade; agriculture seemed not to have materially suffered from it. A great wave of optimism rose at this time in the whole nation, and for a long period associated the success of Corn-Law repeal with an unconquerable hope in the future. Feeling secure in the assurance of its strength, the English shipping interest, at the same time, gave up the privilege it owed to the protection of the law; the Navigation Act was abolished in 1849, and foreign ships were allowed to compete, in English sea-ports, with British vessels. Thus was completed the work of liberation by means of which, thanks to the harmony between interests and principles, the Liberal doctrines and *laisser-faire* have extended their hold over

Digitized by Google

English economic life. In the same age, as will be seen, under other influences, the contrary practice of intervention implanted itself in social matters. The commercial arrangement between England and France (1860) was another application of Free Trade; it was due, on the English side, to Cobden's initiative, and to the great Liberal minister, Gladstone.

Lastly, the higher activities of the nation also were reached by the spirit of systematic readjustment. England had not yet officially recognized the educative function of the State. The utilitarian doctrines and the theories of the philosophic Radicals had emphasized the vital importance of public education, the formative influence of free minds and enlightened wills. The advent of democracy, thenceforth unavoidable, called for a huge effort to spread culture and moral discipline. The new society still sought for its guiding principles in the morals of puritanism, the hold of which on public manners had been further strengthened by the victory of the middle class. But the intellectual development of the people had been neglected in England for the last two centuries. The average standard of knowledge was lower there, barring the élite, than in Germany and France. The old Universities had been drowsing in the torpor of a formal teaching and antiquated traditions. The private schools, free from all control, were most often managed by men destitute of conscience or culture. The public schools, exclusively aristocratic, at least maintained a pretty high ideal of civic formation, and Rugby was even then starting a movement of reform.

Digitized by Google

It was in 1833 that a very moderate sum was first granted for the building of schools. In 1839, the grant was increased; a committee of the Privy Council was appointed to see that the money was efficiently spent. From these humble beginnings sprang the Board of Education, with all its present powers. From 1830 to 1870, the central power extended its sway over public instruction. Matthew Arnold's personal action, his theory of culture, his attempt to elevate English traditional ways to the same level as French methods and German pedagogy, were important influences in this progress. The famous Act of 1870 created a State system of elementary education. In every place where free schools were deficient, special Boards were to allow out of the rates for the opening of neutral schools, in which religious teaching, confined to the reading of the Bible, would be given in an undenominational spirit. As early as 1835 had been created the University of London, a more modern intellectual centre, freer from aristocratic and religious influences than the venerable colleges of Oxford and Cambridge.

On several points besides, the logic of Liberalism reduced the traditional abuses which served the interest of the Established Church. In 1833, ten Anglican sees were suppressed in Roman Catholic Ireland. In 1869, the Irish branch of the English Church was disestablished. These measures were not carried without raising much opposition; they contributed to bring about the religious revival from which a new strength accrued to both Anglicanism and Catholicism.

Digitized by Google

III

The victory of modern England thus found its echo in the laws. Political, administrative and social life were reorganized under the guiding stimulus of an aspiration towards order and logic. Of course the extent of this transformation should not be exaggerated; it was neither complete nor revolutionary. English society about 1880 differed from what it had been about 1830 only by its mixed character. Instead of a structure still wholly feudal, a constant preference for the spontaneous growths of life, and an entirely empirical adaptation to conditions of life long-standing and dimly perceived, we find an almost democratic government, partly adapted to more clearly discerned conditions, according to better-defined methods. In the working of this organism, a very large part must still be ascribed to such forces, ideas, feelings and influences as were merely inherited from the past. Neither the political constitution, nor the system of administration, nor law, nor religion, nor social habits, nor manners, recall to the observer's mind the centralized uniformity, the detachment from tradition, the spirit of equality, which were the main features of French society.

Visiting England in 1860, Taine, like so many others, chiefly remarked the strong stamp of her empiricism, and the characteristics by which the English nation differed from the French. Emphasized by the authority of his genius, supported

Digitized by Google

since by the Conservative school whose leader he was, his judgments, however acute they might be, still showed a somewhat insufficient knowledge of modern historical evolution. All things considered, it was from 1830 to 1884 that there first appeared, under the stress of the economic changes which moulded contemporary Europe, that inner leaning of England towards a new ideal of conscious efficient activity which is to-day at stake in her dramatic struggle against herself. Constantly interrupted, crossed, often thwarted by the hostile action of conservative forces, the weight of traditional habits, and the irresistible rebellion of instinct, this intellectualization of English empiricism is none the less, below the surface ripples, the main current of national evolution that the nineteenth century has bequeathed to the twentieth. And the example of contemporary England may no longer be invoked to defend the ideal of a conservatism resigned only to unavoidable surrenders. There is breaking out in it, working in it a spirit of reforming initiative and systematic adaptation which is the hidden soul of the present.

During the quiet period from 1850 to 1880, the intellectual and social forces which were in conflict in the previous age settled into a temporary equilibrium. The middle Victorian period was an era of relative stability. Typical manners developed then which became characteristic of the new English society. Middle-class habits coloured all the aspects of life. Their peculiar character might be described by means of that incomplete and imperfect modernization already apparent in the

Digitized by Google

social structure. In this mixed essence, two elements, two tendencies were discernible. So far as the manners of 1860 manifested a new spirit, they partook of recent changes, of the democratic evolution; so far as they preserved traditional and older forms, they illustrated the resistance which checked or retarded that evolution, and thus belonged to the revenge of instinct. Let us consider here the former tendency; the latter will be studied further on.

The main features of middle-class England were a more conscious and strenuous effort of initiative applied to the utilitarian labour of economic, political and administrative life; the sense of enterprise and a gift for business, implying some power of organization; and at the same time, a routine-ridden passive inferiority in the disinterested fields of thought and art. The apostle of culture, Matthew Arnold, imposed a name on this unfitness for artistic invention: Philistinism. The attention of the industrial and trading classes, which owing to their activity and wealth set the tone in the new society, was entirely bent upon gain; they took nothing into account but material facts, acknowledged only measurable quantities, and allowed the inner life to wither away. Reduced to narrow formalism or puritan strictness, religion no longer brought them a breath of beauty and joy. What appealed to them was cheap, commonplace, sentimental or pointlessly pretty art; conventional and snobbish literature. This was the reason why the rebellion of instinct against the tame middle-class rationalism was headed by the prophets

Digitized by Google

and philanthropic inspiration. English naturalism, as it appeared fully developed in George Eliot, was, as in France, the product of a time in which middle-class democracy came to the front, whilst the diffusion of scientific rationalism imparted more strictness and method to observation, more philosophical and humanitarian views to writers.

Dickens was the novelist of the lower middle class; he carried within himself the desire for political reforms and social justice he owed to his birth, education and temperament. Though with him liberal logic was touched with emotion, though he denounced the hardness and dryness of the prevailing individualistic ideal, and thus partook to some extent of the revenge of instinct, he was none the less all his life long a "Radical," the adversary of antiquated institutions and conservative routine. His novels promoted the necessary reforms; he contributed to clear English society of its parasitic abuses; and to infuse into it more kindness as well as more reason. Thackeray, a psychologist and an artist, wrote in a spirit of moral equality between all men. His free clear-sighted criticism dissolved the illusive prestige with which tradition clothed aristocratic bodies; he saw more nobleness and beauty in simple souls than among the great of this world; and his irony delighted in the ruthless study of snobbery, the fruit of conservative instincts which had again struck root and blossomed in middle-class servility. George Eliot conveyed through her novels an earnest, meditative thought, which the scientific view of things had coloured with sadness and sublimity. She, too, preferred to

Digitized by Google

depict the lives of the humble; she, too, lulled and comforted human suffering with a gospel of pity and sympathy; but more consciously with her, as with Thackeray or Dickens, the love of mankind grew to assume the first place in religious life. Open to all the influences of critical thought, she stood, about 1860, as a living synthesis of the intellectual movements derived from pure reason.

Realistic in different degrees, unequally hostile to the middle-class atmosphere which permeated their novels as well as life, those three writers were still the outcome of the new society; even whilst outgrowing them and turning against them, they carried in themselves the influences of democracy and rationalism.

IV

Secure in the enjoyment of its prosperity, freed from the most tangible absurdities or most glaring injustices which galled it in its interests or instincts, the middle-class society born of the industrial revolution devoted itself to the pursuit of a practical adaptation always incomplete, always requiring fresh efforts: comfort. This material harmony of wants and life was the degenerate form assumed by the spirit of reforming logic which the triumph of the middle class had brought in its train. It was the only kind of improvement in well-being this class thenceforth clung to. When new problems later on forced themselves upon it, it had lost all nerve to grasp and solve them; and

Digitized by Google

new social elements, instinct with a fresher zeal, were to take up again the work of necessary adaptation it had only begun.

English society, however, was sometimes startled out of the drowsy optimism to which it abandoned itself from 1850 to 1880. In 1854 and 1855, the Crimean War unpleasantly awoke it from its self-confidence. The army, the conduct of operations, the auxiliary departments, the home administration, all appeared suddenly chaotic, inorganic, purposeless, devoid of all method and rule. A fit of anger and humiliation seized on all minds; for a while, England realized, more clearly than she had ever yet done, the besetting sin of her empiricism and routine. On all sides, a better adaptation, a better adjustment of means to ends was demanded. The question of national efficiency was raised for the first time. Then, the war over, past difficulties were forgotten; the measures taken were left incomplete; public services fell back into their old grooves, and society returned to its optimism. It was to be ruthlessly shaken out of it at the end of the century.

Digitized by Google

BOOK II

THE REVENGE OF INSTINCT (1832–1884)

INTRODUCTION

At the same time as English democracy was being moulded by the pressure of the industrial system and the influence of liberal ideas, modern England was deeply stamped by a complementary movement of action and thought. To a different moral and social world belonged the works and doctrines which during the last half-century have corrected or compensated the effects of rationalism and industry. Instead of a conscious, methodical and clear adaptation, we have here a spontaneous, eager, confused upheaval of bodies crushed by suffering and souls preyed upon by secret uneasiness; no order, no system in the theoretic or practical complaints, no unity in the principles, no consistency in the doctrines; the lost equilibrium blindly tended to reassert itself in a new balance; imperfectly adapted, the race was bound to readapt itself, according to the all-powerful and unjustified laws of instinct. The transformation of English society, of its manners, its organs, its preferences and ideas, under the action of social solidarity and of the prophets' idealism, drove back the evolu-

Digitized by Google

tion of England to its empirical traditions; and it was not by mere chance that this counter-movement of thought and will often took the shape of a revolt against industry, the modern spirit, the ways of the new time; that it sought for progress in a retrogression, and extolled the past as a contrast to the present. A rich manifold complex of men, forces, acts and ideas, between which the obvious differences might hide the secret harmony, this aspect of modern England, this phase in her formation, was directed as a whole by the open or hidden influence of intuition; it may be called a revenge of instinct.

It was the outcome of both the needs of the body and the troubles of the spirit. Its causes were, first, the social anarchy brought about by the industrial system, with the breaking of the old fetters which bound but upheld men, with the growth of the proletariat and the extension of poverty; next, the slow gnawing of commercial calculation and utilitarian harshness on the ineradicable feelings which feed the English inner life. Mysticism or religious faith, the belief in another world, the faculty of moral perception, family love and national or human solidarity, the yearning after tenderness, the craving for beauty, the longing for the communion of souls, all such aspirations were bruised by a society where the vile rush after ignoble pleasures and unveiled interests held universal sway in an atmosphere of universal selfishness and relentless strife. Therefore the equilibrium once more destroyed tried to re-establish itself by restoring the links

Digitized by Google

between men and the peace between classes; by reviving the disused spiritual activities and emotional functions. The indignation and the endeavours of men of social good-will, the economic reforms, the organization of trade-unions, the birth of solidarity as an efficient force, the doctrines and fiery criticisms of the prophets, Carlyle, Ruskin; the religious revival and the æsthetic movement; the first conscious stirrings of imperialism; all that during the last seventy years has tended to render England more homogeneous, more stable, more serene, more earnest and beautiful—or at least, all that has tended to this consummation by other ways than those of reason—may be traced to one source, the immediate, obstinate, traditional trust of the English genius in its instinctive inspirations and infallible vitality.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

I. The social elements of the reaction against the new order; the strength and prestige of the nobility; the moral elements; sensibility and the idealistic needs. — II. The economic unrest; the industrial anarchy; the forms and effects of want in the nineteenth century.

FROM 1832 to 1884, a body of facts—economic wants, spiritual requirements—called for a new adjustment of middle-class industrial England to the necessities of life. The doctrines which demanded and planned out this adaptation, the laws which to some extent realized it in manners, sprang primarily from those requirements and wants, and must be accounted for by them.

I

A well-known feature of the English mind is the readiness and regularity with which, in politics, it brings on the reaction after the action. Traditionally swayed by a dim sense of instinctive wisdom, it has ever sought for a warrant against the possible errors of reason in the successive or simultaneous development of contradictory or complementary tendencies. The Liberal doctrinaires of 1830 had tried to curb this habit by force,

Digitized by Google

and had succeeded for a while. Their relatively uncompromising principles, their radical doctrines, had impressed on both friends and foes the notion that England had just gone through a revolutionary stage. It was enough to put in motion that deep-set silent-working spring, that inner mechanism which, with irresistible unerring strength, after a pronounced swing in one direction, drives men's thoughts back again to the other. Immediately after the great reforms of 1834 and 1835, this new leaning of most minds grew evident. It brought back the Conservatives to power as early as 1841. It failed to check the progressive advent of democracy; it allowed the Liberal programme to be carried out by degrees, introducing a minimum dose of logic and method into the social order. But it was effective in raising a hostile tide of forces, ideas and feelings against the current which was carrying England away. The reaction against liberalism and democracy, the opposition of the older society to the new one, thus owed their existence and unity to the very forces against which they waged war; they sprang, previous to all experience, from pure instinct, from the fundamental law which rules over the balance of English politics, like gravitation over that of bodies.

But at the same time, experience strengthened this reaction, confirmed and fostered it on every side. Industrial middle-class England had no sooner conquered the opposition of the old world, than along with the consequences of her principles, her faults came to broad daylight. The individualistic ideal she brought with her, if it

Digitized by Google

answered to the needs of the time, if it expressed at once old tendencies and the fresh vigour of commercial forces, could not assert itself without hurting other instincts, other tendencies, ways of life no less ancient and hallowed. The new ideal consisted in political liberalism, by which the individual was set free; in democracy, which overthrew the traditional hierarchies; in economic *laisser-faire*, which magnified competition into a law of life. A destructive and negative ideal, it thus disintegrated the so far co-ordinated elements of the social organism; and all such parts of this organism as did not derive a necessary freedom from this disintegration, were bound to be injured by it and to set up against it a defensive reaction.

These parts of the nation, these classes, though defeated, were still powerful. It was first and chiefly the landed aristocracy, the nobility and gentry, who stood for the old order, its feelings and discipline, against the encroaching middle classes. The landlords, still surrounded and protected by the instinctive deference of the country people; the owners of those castles and manor-houses whence political authority, financial influence, judicial rights and patriarchal charity had emanated for centuries; those barons of a feudal organization which economic decay had undermined without destroying its prestige, in the England of 1840, through themselves and their immediate followers, still wielded an enormous social power. From their ranks still came, with the members of the Upper House, almost all the great dignitaries of the State. Their influence was

Digitized by Google

closely connected with that of the Established Church; they supported her, and shared in her authority. Their word was still law in those wide provinces of Britain which the feverish anxiety of industry had left untouched; the whole of agricultural and pastoral England—that of the South and East especially—remained, even in the middle of the nineteenth century, under the undisputed sway of the old families and manners. The middle and working classes swarmed elsewhere; here, in this smiling quiet scenery, where national life grown torpid seemed to slumber, the masters of the soil had not conceded any of their proud privileges to the upstart lords of iron and cotton.

And their authority still ruled directly or indirectly over a large portion of the people. Within the circle of their influence moved all the members of country society, necessarily grouped according to a traditional hierarchy; farmers great and small, peasants of all kinds; servants, from the steward to the gamekeeper; tradespeople, shopkeepers and craftsmen of the neighbouring market-town; lawyers, physicians and clergymen attached to the lord of the castle for interested motives, by his free hospitality, by common tastes and habits. The country world was thus truly a world of its own; the economic oppositions, both effects and causes, which elsewhere accompanied the rise of modern England, were there softened down, modified by the still active spirit of the old manners.

There, the middle and the working classes—*i. e.* the professional people and the field labourers—were severed neither from the aristocracy nor

Digitized by Google

from each other, by sharp and passion-stirring conflicts of interest. A rationalist doctor now and then, a dissenting minister, would evade through his unbelief or his faith the powerful hold of the spirit which ruled over provincial society. And no doubt agricultural distress, in more than one place, roused resentment and even riot. Among the violent episodes of English history in that disturbed time, many—rick-fires, scenes of robbery or murder—took place in villages, farmyards or moors. But in spite of these local outbursts, the country people as a whole remained more respectful of the hereditary order, more submissive to the guidance of its temporal or spiritual masters, than the inhabitants of large towns and industrial centres. Thus were increased in number and diversity the social elements which, injured in their interests by the victory of the new England, constituted a body of forces and influences hostile to her. The weight of the passively accepted traditions was superadded, to counterbalance the strength of aggressive individualism, to that of the threatened privileges struggling for existence.

But over the whole of society, both urban and rural, spread far and wide another preference, a psychological and moral one, by which one half of England was united in a common reaction against the new spirit. The utilitarian philosophy, political economy, religious liberalism, evolutionism, all the intellectual movements which followed the rise of English democracy, were equally characterized by their exclusive appeal to reason. They formed the most rationalistic body of

Digitized by Google

doctrines which England had yet entrusted, were it for one moment, with the direction of her thought and conduct. Now, the average temper of English minds is such, that an exclusive confidence in the rational faculties has been so far limited to a few among them, and that this mental attitude has never been or seemed to be accepted at large without being at once eagerly opposed, and soon defeated, by the contrary tendencies.

The exercise of the emotions, of practical or mystical faith, of fanciful or disciplined imagination, has been indispensable, ever since the decisive ages in which the national idiosyncrasy was evolved, to the moral health of most Englishmen. Taken as a whole, this people, in all the periods of its modern history, has shown glowing religious passions and enthusiasms; its literature, its poetry are instinct with a deep tender sensibility, a free, rich, gorgeous imagination; its daily home life hides, under an assumed cold self-possession, genuine attachments, a full earnest sense of the moving and soul-ennobling aspects of life, sincere beliefs seriously carried out. The respect for emotion, the need of emotion are quite as essential to the English mind as its calm energy and firm hold on reality. Therefore the abundant source of mystical ardours, of idealistic outbursts, is ever ready to spring afresh in most hearts, on those occasions chiefly when the inborn instinct of moral balance is calling for a reaction against the passing predominance of positive reason.

Even the advance made by meditated adaptation in the consciousness of modern England has not

Digitized by Google

encroached upon the fund of passion, of emotion and faith which most of her sons preserve in themselves. It is by one of those supple compromises in which her practical genius excels, that to-day, in an increasing number of men, she unites the clear-sighted shrewd sense of the utilitarian logic life requires, with loyalty to the hereditary feelings—the worship of the home, of the fatherland, of duty, of the national Church, of Christ. Rather than renounce these venerable sacred occasions for salutary, stirring and purifying emotions, the average soul will prefer to remain inwardly divided and at war with itself,—modern and practical in most of its feelings and actions, guided by positive experience or science; and at the same time, in the province of the inner life, or on the public occasions for symbolic pious acts, entirely devoted to the collective emotions which have preserved the cohesion, the unity, the health of the national character for centuries. England has never been able, never been willing, never perhaps will consent, to disown for long the idealistic feelings from which, exclusively or concurrently with utilitarian reason, she expects the full satisfaction of her heart and instinct. Therefore the victory of industrial interests and rationalist doctrines, about 1830, and the lasting consequences of this social and moral transformation all through the century, were to call forth a contrary and compensatory movement of emotions and ideas among men of feeling and passion, and among the more numerous order of the average minds, blindly bent on the restoration of moral balance.

Digitized by Google

The moral unrest from which this idealistic reaction, this revenge of instinct sprang, assumed many forms, was felt in many of the aspects of life. The middle class had conquered by means of industry and trade; it brought with itself and diffused into the national atmosphere a calculating spirit of interested ingenuity. The breaking of the old social links, the overturning of the political and economic order, the undermining of habits and traditions, everything contributed to afflict tender souls with the impression of a moral calamity. This impression was strengthened under the withering breath of utilitarian criticism, of rationalist philosophy, of evolutionism and positivism. A humiliating, prosaic and cold view of human nature, of the world and of destiny was replacing the soothing illusions fostered by the old beliefs. As at all the stages of scientific progress, heart-rending sufferings, crises of despair, would seize on such souls as were unable to find a new equilibrium on the new basis, or to make the necessary delusions bloom again on the bare walls within which they were imprisoned by reason.

The irresistible impetus of a wholly material civilization seemed to carry mankind away in a feverish whirl towards lightless, joyless regions. Every day brought a new invention, a new victory of mind over matter; every day, too, destroyed a faith, a reason to live, a motive for pride or dignity, and drew man closer to matter which he subdued and by which he was himself absorbed. At a time when the eager, impatient middle classes were dealing the first blow to the time-honoured

Digitized by Google

fabric of political oligarchy; when clear-sighted, hard-hearted philosophers, whose figures, magnified and distorted, haunted the popular imagination, Bentham, Malthus, were imposing the tyranny of their cold, cruel calculations upon society and life; when sacrilegious criticism beset religion and the Church, and threatened the supernatural without which man could not live; when the boundless power of money was displayed in broad daylight, and when manners appeared dominated by the selfish pursuit of comfort and gain, it was only natural that the idealistic instincts of the English soul, bruised, wounded, distressed in the depths of subconsciousness, should awake from their torpor, and bring forth a rich manifold revival in all the fields of thought and action.

And the concrete aspects of the present, no less than the moral atmosphere, were such as to call forth this revival. The physical and social surroundings in which the new English civilization was placed offended all eyes with ever more glaring ugliness. Town life, the uprooting and transplanting of the agricultural classes, put an end to the invigorating wholesome contact between man and nature; at a very early stage, in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, as soon as the great industrial towns rose, this peculiar uneasiness was felt and tried to express itself. Severed from the glorious beauty of sky and earth, man in towns met with squalor at every step. The roads, grimy with soot and mud, which he trod between the smutty rows of low houses, through suburbs endlessly stretching away towards the

Digitized by Google

deserted fields, suggested to him only deep numb feelings of sadness. Along with the advent of the new manners, the victory of the middle class, and the extension of the franchise, a uniform prosaic dulness seemed to have hidden away the gay, many-coloured variety of the old life; under a sky darkened with smoke, the debasing pursuit of gain, the crude display of tasteless luxury, were the characteristics of modern society. Low mean souls, a harsher competition, a cold utilitarianism in human relations, vulgarity and ugliness in the visible aspects of life, such seemed to be the moral and social outcome of an over-praised material progress.

Even in all those men whom the substitution of the new order for the old did not injure in their interests and rights, the industrial and middle-class civilization was bound to rouse many a revolt; and the first consequences of rationalism and democracy were bound to bring about impassioned reactions of sensibility and instinct among the very men who were benefited by their victory.

II

But industrial individualism contained another germ of suffering and disorder. The social evil from which the revenge of instinct took rise was before all the economic anarchy—want. Directly felt by the labouring classes, this cause roused the complaints and revolts which disturbed England

Digitized by Google

from 1830 to 1850; indirectly perceived by others through emotions of pity or fear, refracted in the conscience of the higher classes, it resulted in the doctrines and efforts of social good-will, it was the source of State intervention.

Modern industry, as we have seen above, had introduced forces making for rational and scientific organization into the empirical tradition of English activity. But the power of co-ordination and system which machinery constitutes had been at first effective only within the factory, for the exclusive benefit of production; and its incomplete attraction had drawn to itself such material or human elements only as its working required; outside, upon the whole of society, it had told, under the law of that stern utilitarianism, as an influence of disorder and social disintegration. It was by degrees, and thanks to the reforming energies of the properly human activities, that industry became, for society at large, an agent of order and meditated adaptation. And it is obvious enough that this progress has not yet reached its final stage. Though the industrial frame of mind, generally speaking, was fitter for the psychological changes required by modern conditions than was the more timid and traditional spirit of the former productive system; though the English middle class had applied to the direction of public affairs the more acute and more impatient realization of facts it owed to the practice of business,—yet industry and trade, considered in themselves, began but tardily to regulate the spontaneously unruly action of their individualistic tendencies. From the

Digitized by Google

intellectual and moral point of view, the advance of English thought in the nineteenth century towards a clearer notion of efficient organization can be traced back to the industrial revolution. In social matters, about the middle of the century, this same revolution appeared chiefly as a cause of anarchy.

The reason was that no law, no foresight of probable or certain consequences, no broad disinterested reflection, had presided over the development of industry. It had spread along the lines of least resistance, through the most favourable districts, drawing to itself the most easily movable human masses, and imposing conditions of life ruthlessly derived from the principle of competition upon the particular world which came into being under its sway. The organization of labour, the rhythm of production and sale, wages, the housing and hygiene of workmen, the police of the working-class aggregates,—all these material or moral aspects of industrial life, had been shaped exclusively by the economic forces and bore their rough irregular stamp: an unavoidable result of pure commercial utilitarianism, unaware as yet of the solicitude required by its human capital; a necessary consequence, too, of theoretic and practical individualism. Craving for freedom and political and social emancipation, the middle class had applied all its energy to destroy the antiquated bonds which hampered its productive activity; it was still unable to perceive the new bonds it was itself to create. Political economy, bent upon the demonstration of *laisser-faire*, directly or indirectly countenanced this

Digitized by Google

indifference or even encouraged it. The theory of social intervention, before it could take shape, had to overthrow economic dogmatism.

As early as the first years of the nineteenth century, a dim feeling of unrest had revealed to a few attentive observers the threatening perils implied in the new industrial activity. Before 1830, some incomplete measures had vainly attempted to check the worst abuses. It was between 1830 and 1850 that the "condition of England" took the first place in the preoccupations of the public; it was from 1840 to 1845 that English distress reached its climax. A series of sensational blue-books brought into daylight the hidden scandals of the factory, the mine and the slum; the apostles of philanthropy were roused, and social charity grew into a bold conscious force. The inorganic incoherent working of industry was known as it really was, and called for a thorough reform. Too long postponed, the intervention of the collective will and of the law was seen to be obviously and immediately necessary.

The distress of 1840 resulted from the free play of competition. Lowering the cost of production as far as possible, industry allowed the pressure of this economic law to bear unrestrictedly upon the human agents it employed. The labour of women and children, cheaper than that of men, was in great demand. Children under ten were numerous in spinning- or weaving-factories; girls, women pregnant or after their confinement were required to perform the same tasks as men. Country parishes would deliver into the hands of manu-

Digitized by Google

facturers batches of pauper children who had fallen into their care; the fate of these "apprentices" constitutes a particularly shocking chapter in industrial history. The discipline of the work-room was harsh; overseers were armed with whips; machines were cleaned at meal-times, or while they worked; accidents were numerous, and no compensation was due. The working-day was as long as pleased the employer; it usually exceeded twelve hours, reached fifteen or even sixteen hours; night work was everywhere exacted; the young and the adult were given the same tasks. Though higher than those of agriculture, the wages of industry, in different economic surroundings, hardly supported a miserable diet. Arrangements now forbidden allowed the manufacturer to pay them in kind, or to replace part of them by the letting of cottages adjoining the works.

Nowhere else was the condition of labour harder than in mines. There, very young children, for fourteen hours running, would pull trucks along low-roofed flooded galleries; manners were brutal, life cruel, and men became more than half barbarous. The official and self-respecting England was horror-stricken when there suddenly rose before her these ghastly hidden abominations. And the debasement of souls answered to bodily sufferings. The industrial class had grown up untouched by any civilizing influence; the loose morals of the factory were a by-word; they were encouraged by the behaviour of employers or overseers. The absolutely untaught condition of the workmen, either children or adults, was emphasized at every

Digitized by Google

page of the Parliamentary reports. Drunkenness had ceaselessly increased; the consumption of alcohol, the number of public-houses, reached ever higher figures from 1815 to 1840; street drunkards became an accepted sight; Saturday nights and Sundays in industrial districts then assumed the peculiar features they have since kept. The number of criminal offenders was equally on the increase; and England maintained an army of convicts in Australia.

Around the proper field of modern industry, in the backward or minor branches of production, the condition of wage-earners was no better. Struck with decay by the combined influences of the industrial and the agrarian revolutions, English agriculture laboured under a deep depression all through the century; a series of causes or accidents, about 1840, made the distress of the country people equal to that of the town proletariat. From 1815 to 1845, in spite of the rising cost of life, rural wages had fallen. The average earnings of a field labourer, about the latter time, were from six to nine shillings a week. Strictly enforced, the New Poor Law (1834) deprived many paupers, in the country, of a resource to which they had grown accustomed. Therefore the migration of rural people towards towns and factories still grew larger during this period; the peasants, torn from their native villages, went and merged, in the industrial quarters of great towns, into a poverty-stricken, degenerate crowd, contact with which sapped their fund of health and strength within two generations.

Digitized by Google

Harder still was the condition of minor industries. The handicraftsmen imprisoned in the routine of home work, the hand-loom weavers unable to stand the competition of the new machines, slowly and miserably died away during the first half of the century. The slums where their distress hid itself presented the most striking picture of economic decay. In London, in Manchester, in twenty similar towns, a ragged people, a prey to murderous epidemics, swarmed in filthy rickety houses, and even in cellars. Like the weavers who resisted the attraction of factories, the men and women engaged in needlework, all the members of the old or unskilled trades, left aside by the main vivifying current of industrial activity, all home workers, bore the weight of competition even more crushingly than in the larger branches of industry. The sweating system developed at that time; tailors and needlewomen were to supply the social writings of the period with some of their most pathetic illustrations.

Such was the predicament of the English people, ten years after the victory of the middle classes. These sad facts stood in glaring contrast with the hopes of bliss which the political agitators had stirred among the working masses before the Reform Act. Therefore the first gleams of class-consciousness and of socialism were dimly seen during these tragic years. The Chartist movement was instinct with an ardent spirit of social vindication; in its leaders, in its followers, in many of the enthusiastic mystical theorists who advocated rebellion or human brotherhood, historians

Digitized by Google

recognize the forerunners of English Socialism. But these eager or naïve reactions of popular instinct cannot be studied here; and the more fully developed doctrines of Owen, Hodgskin and Thompson have not sufficiently influenced the following course of events for this summary sketch to dwell upon them.

The hard fact of want has been much more directly and more deeply effective in the development of England. Revealed to the eyes and the conscience of the public at large, it harmonized with the influences and forces which strove to start an emotional reaction against the new society, and fused them into a wide current of thought and action. The scandalous sight of poverty by the side of middle-class luxury supplied the denunciations of social prophets with the necessary impulse; the ugliness of industrial squalor was an incentive to the hankering regrets of beauty's apostles; the perils of subversion and death implied in this social scourge spurred on the instinctive search after an equilibrium from which resulted that readjustment to life called interventionism. The revenge of instinct, prepared by oppositions, rancours, fears, prejudices, emotions, found its necessary nucleus and its solid starting-point in the concrete mass of economic evil.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

DOCTRINES

I. The philosophy of Carlyle; his social doctrine; heroism; State intervention and feudalism. His influence; the evolution of economic concepts.—II. The religious revival; the Oxford Movement; its results; ritualism; the Catholic reaction.—III. The æsthetic movement; spontaneousness and will in English art; Ruskin, his artistic and social message; his influence.

I

THERE is a philosophy of intuition; and this philosophy, like all others, is indebted to the reasoning faculty for its expression and demonstration. It is yet essentially different from all the doctrines which rely upon reason alone in their search after truth. Without losing touch with psychological realities, and keeping in mind the natural inner divisions of ideas, not only is it possible to contrast the body of rationalist theories with the intellectual movements impelled by a contrary spirit—one can also trace these movements, by means of their characteristics, back to the network of social and moral tendencies which thwarted the logical aim of individualism. One may find the most conscious expression of the revenge of instinct in Carlyle's intuitive and mystical philosophy.

Digitized by Google

With the Liberals and the dogmatic exponents of political economy, English thought had been attracted by the ideal of scientific lucidity; it had undergone the influence of the philosophers of France, and was thus in some way a product of French thought engrafted on the English temperament. On the contrary, with Carlyle and his disciples, the European reaction against the eighteenth century drove England back to the Germanic elements of her national originality. Owing largely to the puritan tradition which had kept its ground in Scotland better than elsewhere, Carlyle's philosophy borrowed many of its leading ideas from German criticism; it was largely derived from Kant, Fichte and Jean-Paul. Taking up again the work Coleridge had begun, Carlyle opposed an idealistic system of metaphysics, German in its origin, to French-born rationalism.

There are two modes of existence: the real one, which is that of mind; the mode of appearances, which is that of nature; or rather, mind only exists, and the visible world has no other reality or value than that of a symbol; it is the external concrete expression through which mind makes itself perceptible to the senses. By clothing itself with matter, the divine universal soul becomes nature; by clothing themselves with bodies, the created souls become men; by clothing themselves with cloth and insignia, the relations between men, mere abstractions, become hierarchies, classes, governments, and the whole social and moral organization. Thus both human society and the universe are based on necessary symbols; these only give sub-

Digitized by Google

stance to the immaterial spirit; and one may say that clothes are the essence of society, the essence of everything, provided one only considers appearances; as soon as one looks for being, for reality, clothes vanish away, an illusory ghost; there remains only mind, the intelligences, wills and feelings, the hidden activity of which upholds the scenery we call nature and society in the infinite void. In the same way did Kant's forms of perception and understanding clothe the unknowable noumenon with time, space, and intelligible relations.

The humorous "philosophy of clothes" is thus a picturesque expression of transcendental idealism. Carlyle's metaphysics are neither original nor complex; but the creative effort of his thought has tended chiefly to draw practical consequences from those principles. At a very early date—in his strange and wonderful *Sartor Resartus*—he prepared the subsequent development of his social doctrine. The commotion of events, the anxious years which followed the Reform Act, the bitter depressing sight of industrial anarchy, helped his indignation and anger to take a definite shape. Saying that clothes are everything in human society, is an ironical way of reminding us that they are nothing. Only the soul exists; and only that human order exists which is based on it. Now the divine soul is Justice; and society crumbles to ruin unless it be just. Should the hierarchy of clothes clash with that of souls, the former it is that would be wrong, and would have to be set right. Thus is laid down the principle of a social

Digitized by Google

reform, grounded on an idealistic conception of nature and life.

To such hearts as mean well, love justice, and rebel against social wrong, who shall point out the way? One man, or men, if several there be, whom the universal Spirit has inspired with a fruitful emanation of itself. By probing his conscience, by following the obscure suggestions of instinct, the "hero" comes into touch with immanent wisdom, the source of truth and life, but before all the source of strength. In the superhuman energy of his words, his faith, his acts, will dwell the sign of his mission, the token of his right; he shall freely shape the plastic clay of minds, laws and nations; and his will shall have its own reason deeper than all reasoning. A founder of religions, nationalities, dynasties, a prophet or a seer, a tribune or a soldier, a poet or a philosopher, he shall create or destroy, as the eternities have decreed. But absolute sincerity, impassioned earnestness, a complete rejection of all petty selfishness, will always raise him above the mean crowd. It is through those privileged souls that the will of the universe speaks; and their initiative inspires all other men. More flatly than any doctrine, this mysticism of personal intuition contradicts the patient effort of collective clear-sightedness by means of which rationalism tries to erect the house of truth, made by all, open to all. Incommunicable, haughty, the hero's message, as Carlyle preaches it, brings us no demonstration but itself.

So his social doctrine is an imperative gospel of authority and obedience. England is diseased,

Digitized by Google

says Carlyle; distress is spreading everywhere; to stop one's ears and eyes would be a guilty and vain attempt. Chartism, the scare of the ruling classes, is not an eruption of hell, one day's outburst; it has its deep cause and reality; let it be crushed, and it will burst forth again in another shape; only a vast effort of will and conscience can spare England a revolution. If she is suffering, it is because her soul is diseased; and to discern the evil that preys upon her, we must look back through former ages, compare the present with the past.

In the Middle Ages, society enjoyed a stable and relatively harmonious order because it was based on a discipline accepted by all, in which duties and rights were fairly balanced. Feudalism rested upon strength; but strength was then a real superiority, and close by the sheltering walls of the castle rose the convent, the symbol and focus of a spiritual hierarchy, the spreading influence of which mitigated the rule of the other. In this organic whole, every one found his place, and mutual, acknowledged links bound all men together. The lowest peasant had his legal and moral status, could rely on the support of the lord whom he served, and who knew him personally; the swineherd who tended his pigs, in the depths of the Saxon woods, never feared lest he should miss, when night came, the bacon he freely drew from his master's larder. . . . The present, on the contrary, is an age of anarchy and rebellion. Two principal errors have hastened on the downfall of the old order: individualism, which sets up each

Digitized by Google

separate being, not the aggregate, as the true social unit; mechanism, the superstition of material and industrial progress, the rash faith in the instruments, the institutions, the systems, which man has tried to substitute for the direct all-essential contact between soul and soul, between human energy and the matter which it must subjugate. The era of industry and freedom is thus that of competition and selfishness; no more faith, no more charity or hope; the sway of facts and figures is a thousand times more inhuman than that of feudal force. In the universal struggle of unchecked appetites, the weak are crushed, the strong triumph, until they succumb in their turn; and the atmosphere of society is but materialism.

For this degeneration, the ruling classes are responsible more than any other; it is from their indifference that want has taken rise; theirs should be the initiative of the cure, since theirs was that of the evil. Carlyle's mystical idealism led him, as has been seen, to an aristocratic theory of social salvation. To the God-appointed guides of nations is due the progress of mankind towards justice and order; and industrial anarchy will be cured, provided it finds its true chiefs. But where are they to be looked for? The exhausted nobility is engrossed by a drowsy and futile dilettantism; it plays with life, preserves game on its lands, dresses itself up in the tawdry clothes of Dandyism; a decayed class, it no longer fulfils any social function, and so has no longer any title to live; let it wake up, realize its duties, enforce its rights; its authority will be justified from the day when

Digitized by Google

it grows salutary. The middle class has lost its soul; the worship of Mammon has replaced with it that of Christ; its eager spirit of gain and pelf gnaws at its heart; it turns the industrial undertaking into a devilish enterprise, soiled through and through by injustice. It thus taints a source of wealth which might have proved fertilizing; industry, taken in itself, has its own greatness and beauty; it fights with matter, and displays the sacred virtue of effort. A better organization of labour will restore its social function to the middle class, if only, inspired with a new spirit, it can grasp its duty, and realize the justification of its existence: *i. e.* to raise all men's lives to an ever higher level above material nature and its needs.

Making a bold attack on the conclusions of political and economic individualism, Carlyle extols the necessary action of beneficent authority. His fierce bitter criticism upsets the barriers put up by the doctrinaires of Liberalism. Democracy is the government of prattlers; liberty does not matter; the only right man has is to mean well; his only freedom, to do good. And if the ruling classes fail to fulfil their task, the State will intervene. Standing for the divine power, uniting in itself moral and physical strength, it will allow no legal superstition to check the free play of its ever-watchful activity. Inspectors of labour will visit works, mines, cottages; will see that nowhere is man turned by man to selfish uses beyond the bounds settled by human and religious laws. Precise rules will fix these limits, will protect the wage-earner against all possible abuses. The State will

Digitized by Google

undertake that essentially national task, education; knowledge will kill social rebellion, born of ignorance. And should poverty prove stronger than laws, should there be too many men in England, emigrants, at the expense of the State, will go and people the far-away colonies, those fragments of an empire in the making.

Meanwhile, economic life must be altered in its very principle; the obligation under which the employer lies to the workman will not be acknowledged only by the payment of wages; a deeper and more effectual solidarity, accepted by the heads of industry, will bind them to the troops they lead. After the pattern of armies, each factory will obey its captain, and his careful, paternal and firm discipline. Thus will lasting relations be recreated between individuals; competition will no longer draw together human atoms, and scatter them again unceasingly; production and exchange will centre round permanent points, and life will screen over with its flowery growth the harsh, rigid framework of economic laws. Brought into closer touch with one another, men will no longer bruise and gall each other's selfishness; and society, by submitting to the indispensable authorities, will again secure that organic health which the intoxication of freedom had ruined.

This aristocratic mystical form of State Socialism was fraught with the message of the moment; it answered to the dim-felt needs of all minds. The unrest spread by industrialism at its worst, the bitterness of the old oligarchy undermined or overthrown, the sufferings of tender hearts, of

Digitized by Google

devout souls, of the imaginations shocked by the hard matter-of-fact life of the age, were bound to be soothed by this bitter criticism of the present, by this impassioned enthusiasm for a better past. Around this doctrine have crystallized all the feelings of opposition or preference which might, about 1850, withstand the progress of democracy and rationalism. Pointing out a remedy for the distress caused by industrial *laisser-faire*, it would win many hearts by its spirit of charitable intervention; leaving the ruling classes their confirmed privileges, it would naturally agree with political conservatism. Diversely modified by temperaments and surroundings, it has been mainly efficient, now through the forces of social reform, now through the elements of anti-liberal reaction it contained; but on the whole it has been chiefly a source of moral energy.

From the restlessness and depression of spirits in which romanticism on the wane still lingered, it called up a brief, clear-cut, striking idea and image of duty; spiritualized and diffused in the mists of transcendency, the puritan God, stripped of dogmas, was thus identified with Kant's moral imperative; and an absolute injunction, perceived by all in their deepest consciousness, brought to man the only revelation of the infinite he could receive. Thenceforth action, ceaseless action, was the only possible end; in it alone was life; and when confronted by social anarchy, by the running sores of misery and want, charitable, healing, constructive action proved the surest and most necessary virtue. This doctrine was thus an unparalleled

Digitized by Google

suggestion of positive altruistic activity; awaking souls, kindling the fire of zeal, it raised the élite of an English generation to a clearer consciousness of solidarity. If "social compunction," that feeling which arose about 1840, under the stress of stirring revelations, at the pathetic call of poets and novelists, has left its stamp on the history of England in concrete lasting activities; if it has altered, along with the atmosphere of public life, the views of philosophers and the notions of economists, it owed its effect chiefly to the powerful massive impact of the ideas of Carlyle, the prophet, in a new language, of an old conservative faith. For the reform of laws and manners, as Carlyle demanded it, was but a return to the empirical habits of English thought. Burke would not have disowned that bitter denunciation of rationalism; and there the pursuit of order, instead of being promoted by the exigencies of the mind, blindly followed the directions imposed by life.

Next to Carlyle, a less incomplete history of intellectual evolution would have to notice many a symptom of the same movement. His influence touched many disciples, men of thought or of action; the Christian Socialists of 1848 were imbued with it. Though F. D. Maurice, by his theology, was rather a representative of the Broad Church and of religious rationalism, the practical doctrines and efforts of the group whose leader he was were directly derived from Carlyle. Kingsley was true to his master's spirit when he tried to find a cure for poverty in the concerted, strenuous activity of the ruling classes; when to Chartism,

Digitized by Google

that profane levelling movement, he opposed a form of social charity which accepted the existing inequality between men, and was wholly bent on reviving a patriarchal Christian society; when he extolled co-operation as a system of production able to cope with all industrial difficulties.

In the same way one might find a direct relation between the intellectual aspirations centring round Carlyle and the transformation of political economy with John Stuart Mill. Starting from an opposite point of the philosophical horizon, the great utilitarian logician had been reached by the wave of social sentiment. A moral crisis had overthrown the exclusive predominance of reason in his mind; a feminine influence had opened him to the perception of heart-stirring human realities. His *Principles of Political Economy* were, about 1850, the meeting-point of democratic rationalism and of instinctive interventionism.

This book illustrates the rise of a new, eclectic and complex mood, in which a temporary equilibrium was found between the contrary requirements of thought and conscience,—a mood which prevailed in England during the quiet optimistic years of the middle Victorian period. John Stuart Mill studies, not only the production, but the distribution of wealth; science with him dwells, not only on principles, but on applications. A human element is reintroduced into the calculations and deductions of the economist; he awakes to the fact that he does not deal with abstract quantities, but with living sentient beings. A new light, especially, must be thrown upon the consideration of

Digitized by Google

services; the exchange of commodities does not cover the whole field of economic relations. It is not a definite order that the scientist analyses and describes; social advance is still possible through the action of the national will; the distribution of riches is governed by human laws, which man has created and can therefore modify. And the instrument of this progress will be the State; its functions, which no theoretic prejudice must any longer curtail, will be justified so far as they prove useful. The problem of the future will be how to reconcile the greatest possible degree of individual freedom with collective ownership of the implements of labour, and an equal share for all in the produce of the common industry. So Mill's doctrine, compatible to some extent with State Socialism, is not unlike Carlyle's on several points. Enthusiastically welcomed by some, sharply censured by others, his book dealt the first blow to the prestige of Ricardo's system within the very pale of utilitarian orthodoxy; it marked the beginning of a long process of revising and correcting which has been during the last half-century the salient feature in the history of political economy.

II

The sources of religious life are so deep, so abundant in the English genius, that the historical periods when they seemed to run short were always followed by a fresh outburst of welling vitality. Everybody knows the rhythm of those successive

Digitized by Google

revivals since the Reformation, and even in the Middle Ages. The eighteenth century had witnessed a widespread movement of faith and popular conversion, Methodism, born at Oxford, diffused all over England by the indefatigable exertions of Wesley. But its growth had been rapid chiefly in the lower classes, outside the Established Church and the fashionable circles; an obscure and, as it were, subterranean growth, the social and moral effects of which are none the less among the chief formative influences of modern England. The tone of idealism and practical earnestness, of philanthropy and collective charity, which became that of the English middle class about 1840, and the secret leaning of the average minds towards a revenge of instinct, were largely due to that quickening of conscience which Methodism effected among the people, and which by degrees reached the adjacent superior human strata. The puritanic temper of contemporary England, the strictness of her life, of her literature, of the theatre, these new and comparatively recent characteristics definitively prevailed about the time of the first Reform Act. No doubt the cause must be looked for in the advent of the middle class, to a large extent permeated by the spirit of dissenting sects; but among these sects, it was Methodism that directly or indirectly was most effective in producing that social transformation.

The Anglican Church, as has been seen, had during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century continued to rest in the same drowsiness as in the preceding age; whilst from widely distant

Digitized by Google

parts of the intellectual or political horizon were gathering against her the threatening storms of rationalism and liberalism. The Evangelical party, within the Established Church, alone showed initiative and life; somewhat analogous to Methodism in spirit, it hardly appealed to cultivated minds and classes. Its intellectual narrowness, its exclusive attention to moral conduct, did not impart to it that sympathetic quality and winning attractiveness without which imaginations are not stirred. Its strength was spent in generous philanthropic movements, in the anti-slavery agitation, in prison reform; it was another unseen tributary to the wide stream of social intervention which by that time was collecting its plentiful waters from all regions. The spark which kindled both intelligences and hearts, restoring to the English Church, to religion itself, their living strength to resist the onslaught of modern criticism, and their power of initiative in the necessary work of social adaptation, came not from Evangelicalism.

The general causes which brought about the Oxford Movement were, on the one hand, the latent restlessness of souls, which a torpid religious life deprived of the spiritual emotions they needed; on the other, all the forms and effects of rationalism: the attacks of philosophers and politicians on the Establishment, on the social influence of the clergy, on the authority of dogma; the formation of a new society guided by no other light than that of the mind, bent on no other victories than worldly ones, hardly respectful of the past, and obeying no law but its own. The Liberal govern-

Digitized by Google

ment, in 1833, reformed the Irish episcopate. Two archbishoprics, ten bishoprics were abolished. The movement began at once; on July 14, 1833, John Keble delivered a sensational sermon at Oxford on "national apostasy." An apostasy might indeed be apprehended, he argued, since a solemn denial of the ecclesiastical privilege had contradicted the doctrine of apostolic succession, the direct link maintained by ordination between the Anglican bishops and the apostles. Thus to trace back the origins of the English Church to the very beginnings of Christianity, was to enhance its authority, prestige and venerable sacredness. This historical contention was the main point in the teaching of Keble and the other leaders of the movement: Froude, Rose, Palmer, Percival, Pusey, above whom rose the rich, strong and versatile personality of Newman.

It is not necessary, and it would be difficult to sum up here the history of this crisis. The essential point is to give a summary account of the reformers' position, of the difficulties they found in their path, of the results they obtained. What Newman and his followers wanted, was first to fortify the weakened authority of the Anglican Church; in order to reach this end, they founded an Association of the Friends of the Church, to maintain her doctrines, her worship, her discipline and prerogatives in their entirety. At their call the clergy took heart again; the widespread feeling of traditional loyalty to the national Church was roused, and expressed itself on every side by declarations of attachment; the fears aroused by the

Digitized by Google

threats of political liberalism were soon allayed. The Oxford revivalists wanted as well to stir up new powers of energy and activity within the Church; a series of "Tracts for the Times," dealing with dogma, discipline and morals, came out from September 1833; they appealed to the clergy, with a view to stimulating their efforts, and helping them to realize more clearly their own duty and faith. Lastly, the Puseyites, as they were called, attempted to trace the historical origins of the Anglican persuasion, so as to found its doctrine and worship on a basis more ancient and more stable than that of the Reformation alone. To their minds craving for continuity, longing for the consecration of centuries, secretly leaning to the solemn rites of Catholicism, the Protestant idea, in its rational and cold novelty, did not afford complete religious satisfaction. The principle of inner evolution and disintegration implied in the spirit of free investigation in matters of faith had since Luther's time brought about, and was still intensifying, an endless process of division among sects; not giving up this spirit as yet, divided from the Roman confession by many a difference in belief, they nevertheless tried to find a compromise between Protestant rationalism and Catholic tradition.

According to Newman, the English Church does not date from the sixteenth century; it is as old as the Church of Christ, and indeed a branch of it; it sprang directly from the primitive stock, and preserves the direction first assigned by the apostles better than do the other shoots—the Roman and

Digitized by Google

Greek Churches. Hence the emphasis laid on apostolic succession. But for the direct contact, from episcopal ordination to ordination, between the Anglican bishops and the very disciples of Christ, the former would lack the mystical stamp of divine Grace; whilst this derivation, once placed beyond controversy, secures their sacred imprescriptible rights to all the clergy. Thus was a breach opened between the new Anglicanism and popular Protestantism. To the minds of Dissenters and "Low Churchmen," the essential constitutive element of the reformed religion was its breaking away from a corrupt tradition; a negation before all, the Protestant idea rose in uncompromising hostility against the errors of the past or the present.

So Newman had to fight his Puritan adversaries no less than his Liberal opponents. In both categories, he discerned and pointed out the same destructive rationalism. In order to resist and conquer them, he looked for support among the great Anglican divines of the seventeenth century; among theologians yet free from sectarian narrowness, and uniting sound Protestant reason with the serene broad-mindedness of Catholic thought. With a view to confirm the historical basis of his main contention, he undertook to publish a collection of the Holy Fathers, with the help of his friends. And as he had already to meet the charge of Romanism, which the tendencies of the movement made every day more plausible, he defined his own attitude more clearly by the theory of the *via media*. Between the two errors and ex-

Digitized by Google

tremes—Roman Catholicism, vulgar Protestantism —the genuine tradition of the primitive Church is represented by a golden mean: Anglicanism. This thesis was not new: as early as the seventeenth century, theologians had striven to bring it to light; but formulated by Newman, and marked by him with a character of perfect precision, it was very successful; the High Church party, even now, builds up its pretensions on no other ground.

A winning speaker, a fascinating personality, Newman drew to his sermons in St. Mary's Church at Oxford enthusiastic, spell-bound flocks of young men; whilst his influence was spurring on the ever-widening group of the Tractarians. But on all sides resistance was breaking out. A meditated opposition with many; an instinctive emotional hostility with most. Against the movement rose especially those two foes whom it itself attacked: first, the Protestant spirit, in its aggressive irreconcilable vigour, the old spirit of hatred against Rome, the Puritan preference for an inner, democratic and individual religion, the dislike for that traditional and hierarchized worship to which the Puseyites wanted to bring England back; so the successive Tracts roused much anger among middle-class readers; the reformers were denounced as traitors, as abettors of the Roman Church. And on the other hand, the political and philosophic forces of rationalism turned against this alarming revival of religious mysticism.

From 1839, the standpoints of the conflicting parties grew better defined. A series of incidents brought to light the increasing antagonism be-

Digitized by Google

tween the average Protestant feeling and the doctrines of the Puseyites. The last of the Tracts gave to the new Anglicanism a more and more pronounced bent towards the Catholic tradition. A long moral crisis, meanwhile, was destroying Newman's faith in the compromises by which he had hoped to find peace, and the logic of both his mind and his heart was driving him Romeward. During the following years, his disciples struck out two different courses; the more numerous, the moderates, drew nearer Anglicanism, and managed to make themselves acceptable to it; the others completed the evolution they had begun, and most of them went over to Catholicism. Newman led the way in 1845, when the scheme of a Protestant bishopric at Jerusalem, in open defiance to the claims of Rome, wrecked the pious endeavours by which he had tried to demonstrate the Catholicity of Anglicanism.

With Newman's conversion the Oxford Movement properly so called ended, and the religious revival which continued it opened. Two currents appeared, seemingly diverging, but really parallel, which the turn events are taking promises some day to reunite. On the one hand, the Neo-Anglican party, benefited by the very calamity which had seemed likely to crush it, freed from a dangerous suspected vanguard, rallied, organized itself within the pale of the national Church, and pursued its thenceforth regular expansion. No doubt the opposition it had raised did not subside; the Protestant instinct still reawoke threateningly, whenever some Puseyite went over to Rome,

Digitized by Google

whenever some incident revealed the advance of the new spirit; but neither criticism nor ridicule could check this progress. For many a moral force, many an influence did favour its course. In all quarters, such souls as were attached to a symbolical order, to the traditional hierarchy, to the consecrated forms, or desired solemnity in worship and a powerful clergy; the disciples of the æsthetic movement, which was even then developing into a doctrine and a party; those whose hearts were attracted by the ideal of collective charity and the programme of Christian Socialism, united their efforts to restore, along with the pomp and beauty, the strength of religion. A number of edifying books came out, written with the purpose of reviving the poetry of the mediæval Church, of quickening long-blunted sensibilities to the magic of the ritual pomp in which the divine service was performed of yore.

The object of the ritualist movement, indeed, was to re-establish that pomp by slow, prudent stages. It found its main support in the official Prayer-book, and claimed to derive from it the Protestant worship in its undiminished beauty, such as it was practised before the iconoclastic rule of the Puritans. Sacred music, ornaments, ecclesiastical vestments, by degrees thus resumed in the English Church the function and importance Roman Catholicism had left them. Free from all necessary connection with the Universities, diffused like a new ferment over the English soil, the ritualist spirit, whose focus was in the High Church party, pursued its action through the

Digitized by Google

middle Victorian period, and later. And not only was its influence perceptible in the greater solemnity of public worship and in the increased authority of the clergy, but it roused a more charitable zeal, a more strenuous realization of their duty among pastors. The tendency to Christian interventionism, on the whole, has harmonized with the active renovating soul of the religious revival.

On the other hand, Roman Catholicism itself was indebted to the illustrious converts who joined it, to the humbler ones who followed their example, and to the leaning which bent devout imaginations towards ritualistic ceremonies, for a fresh outburst of vitality in contemporary England. The causes of the Catholic renaissance, and of its progress down to our very day, are too much mixed up with the moral and social life of our time to be sketched here beforehand; they will be explained further on. But as early as the middle of the Victorian era, this awakening was conspicuous. Instead of remaining in England a small sect, held in suspicion, still excluded—but a few years before—from the enjoyment of full civil rights, Catholicism appeared already as a living, prosperous and developing religious organization. Its converts were many, especially in the highest or lowest orders, in the nobility or the people; the puritanic middle classes looked less favourably upon it. The future Cardinal Manning was one of these converts, in 1851. In 1850, Pius IX considered that the times were ripe for a solemn consecration of that progress; he re-established the

Digitized by Google

ancient Roman hierarchy in England, and placed an Archbishop of Westminster at its head. The attempt was premature; spurred on by public indignation, Parliament laid this decree under a legal interdict. But twenty years later, in 1871, the prohibition was withdrawn. Like surplices or tapers in Anglican churches, the Catholic organization has fought its way among English sects by dint of patience and stubbornness; deriving its strength mainly from the irresistible attraction which more and more draws the High Church, frightened at the havoc free criticism is working in matters of faith, towards the principle of authority.

III

The Oxford Movement was a reawakening of the religious spirit; the æsthetic movement which developed parallel to it was not a renaissance, but, seemingly at least, an essentially new creation, a positive enrichment of the English mind. Religion had always been the most living of spiritual activities in England. On the other hand, the taste for art, the craving for the beautiful, were not among the natural spontaneous growths of her soil or her people. No doubt, modern culture had not bloomed out, there as everywhere else, without that flower of beauty which had sprung from the candid faith and homely life of the Middle Ages, and to which the light of the antique genius, in the sixteenth century, had imparted a fresh

Digitized by Google

strength and brighter hues. During the luxuriant spring of English civilization, more particularly in the time of Elizabeth, the pagan intoxication of the mind and the senses had for a while exalted the faculties of a whole race; and the people of London had risen, for a few years, to a fairly subtle instinct of æsthetic appreciation. But even in this glorious period, or during the classical age of Queen Anne, literature had, among all arts, almost exclusively enjoyed wide popular favour. In spite of the endeavours of an always original and distinguished élite, in spite of the achievements of composers and architects in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of admirable painters in the eighteenth, painting, architecture, sculpture, music, the decorative arts, had never been practised in England, since the Middle Ages, with that universal interest, that inborn aptitude of the many, that assistance of a favourable moral and social atmosphere, which account for their fortune with some privileged nations and at certain epochs of history. Capable of succeeding honourably in all arts, famous in several, modern England had never shown herself to be an artistic nation.

This feature is intimately connected with the other characteristics of her genius. For the artist's attention is essentially disinterested; it stops the working of the instinctive mechanism which, in ordinary life, makes perception subservient to necessary or useful ends; it thus meets in England, from the strength of this concatenation more closely knit than elsewhere, unceasingly

Digitized by Google

confirmed by the preferences and wills of new generations, with a resistance particularly hard to conquer. Interested motives and the desire for practical action cannot assume such predominance with a people, without correspondingly narrowing the field kept apart for the free play of the mind and the senses.

No doubt, the idealistic needs, the longing for intense emotions, for pure vivid imaginings, is quite as deep in England as the desire for material utility. But traditional English idealism has not sought for its satisfaction in art. It has found its natural vent in religious feelings, in mysticism, moral heroism, the attainment of puritan godliness; in an impassioned devotion to the commonwealth, or in a struggle against the hostile forces of matter. This is the reason why English art almost always aims at some end foreign to itself; it does not exist for its own sake, but as a means; it must convey a lesson or an emotion, act upon the mind or the heart. Therefore the most numerous and the greatest of English artists are writers; literature, of all arts that in which the medium of expression is most intellectual, lends itself most readily to the expression of a non-artistic ideal. And among those writers, indeed, the most popular have not won the admiration of the crowd by the merits of their manner; they appeal to the many by the emotional character, or the didactic and improving value of their inventions.

Moreover, if the English were for long, are perhaps still, the least artistic nation in Western

Digitized by Google

Europe, it is because their sensibility, in the average, is not only guided by the perception of the useful; it is little gifted, as well, for æsthetic sensations. Leaving out brilliant exceptions, the power of spontaneously and strongly enjoying beautiful things—sounds, shapes, proportions, colours, images—is not so much developed in them as in other nations; those of the South for instance, whose naturally refined senses are better capable of subtle distinctions. English physical sensibility is not the delicate harmonious operation of instruments ever directed by a fine tact; left to its free impulses, it soon turns into gross sensualism. So it is constantly kept down by the exertion of the moral will, and transmutes itself into glows of imagination or passion. This again can account for the unparalleled wealth, the universal success in England of emotional literature; and for the scarceness, on the contrary, of the pure artist, whether in images, shapes or words.

These psychological traits have been more than once pointed out; they are inseparably associated with our common notion of England. But we must not forget that the remarkable strength of the English will is an element not to be overlooked, whenever we consider the natural resources of the British genius or soil. In order to acquire the economic or spiritual activities which the land or the race seemed to have denied this people, it has relied, every time it found them supremely desirable, upon the strenuous energy by means of which it every day conquers the world of facts.

Digitized by Google

It is well known that it has mastered physical nature, so far as it could not without perishing adapt itself to it. Everybody knows, too, that the English have succeeded in curbing their own inner nature, sufficiently at least to base on their self-esteem the notion they have of their moral individuality, and the image of it which they wish the world to accept. It is possible to see a similar effort in the heroic endeavours by which modern England has decided to conquer the artistic gifts she lacked by sheer energy of will. This enterprise is older than the nineteenth century; as early as the Renaissance, the pride of English civilization, then in its prime, claimed for itself all the arts which antiquity boasted of, and contemporary nations were brilliantly reviving. Thenceforth, all the arts existed indeed in England, if not always in their fruitful reality, at least in the patriotic determination which insisted on not being deprived of them.

The great æsthetic movement, whose leader Ruskin was, can be connected with that tradition; it was before all a crusade, an appeal to energy; it turned for beauty to moral enthusiasm, and made art into a religion, the principle of a social and ethical reform. The pursuit of the beautiful is no longer in this instance, as it is elsewhere, the expression of a natural sensuousness, following the bent of instinct in its cravings; it is the deliberate, earnest, almost pious action of a soul performing a duty. We must not, then, wonder that, failing all inborn faculty of æsthetic sensibility, the means and inner resources required by

Digitized by Google

this great enterprise should have been supplied by the religious energies of the soul; nor that the artistic revival should have developed by turning some of the old spiritual springs into new channels. It was not essentially a deep change, but rather a superficial and voluntary modification. So far, this aspect of the revenge of instinct reminds one of the artificial activities of rationalism and meditated adaptation; but this resemblance is misleading; though the æsthetic renaissance was not the spontaneous expansion of an artistic people creating beauty in order to enjoy it, it was none the less the instinctive manifestation of a proud religious people, whose life-force wrested from nature one more greatness, gratification and strength.

About 1840, this initiative was called for by the dimly felt needs of national health; the social and moral circumstances demanded it more pressingly than ever. We have seen how the new society contradicted emotional, philosophic and religious idealism; how it had diffused the ugliness of industrial utilitarianism over the face of the earth and the life of man. Vulgarity was the very characteristic of middle-class civilization; manners, clothes, language put on a monotonous, mean, dull colour; huge manufacturing towns stretched away endlessly and dismally under the murky sky; the railways cut geometrical gloomy vistas through the green loveliness of the fields; the soulless labour of machines turned out products destitute of originality, untouched by the creative hand of man; the triumph of the middle

Digitized by Google

class darkened the gaiety of public life, and its puritan spirit impoverished an already cold and austere worship. An age of ugliness seemed to open; a physical and moral ugliness, the visible expression of that inner withering, that universal materialism which destroyed love, faith and life. Carlyle's philosophy was a reaction of the moral life, asserting its deep, primitive and all-important reality, against the disastrous excesses of mechanism and logic. The Oxford Movement was a reaction of the religious life, striving to bloom out freely and assume the lustre of strength and magnificence. The æsthetic revival was a reaction of emotional life, striving to reinspire nature and familiar sights with the divine Presence, by creating joy and glory for every one.

Ruskin's artistic teaching was very simple in its principles, very complex and sometimes contradictory in its deductions. It was not a rational system; by its inner origins, its development, its method, it harmonized with the intuitions of a Carlyle. It belonged to the same current of instincts and ideas, by all its assertions, and by its mode of asserting. It is primarily a burning glorification of the poetry of things; an effort to discover, express and reveal the beautiful. A torpor made of laziness, ignorance, hardening and impiousness blinds the eyes of men to the awful wonder of creation; let them learn to see, and they will be dazzled by the grand aspects of nature, and by the tiny miraculous beauties of the humblest beings. An attentive sympathetic study will give a voice again to the dumb eloquence of

Digitized by Google

cathedrals; the masterpieces of human art will appeal to our hearts in their language of nobleness and sincerity. And from nature and art will emanate the same mystical message; the visible universe will appear as a divine symbolism.

Carlyle's idealism, more metaphysical, aimed at dispelling all illusory forms, the better to reach the only reality, mind; Ruskin's idealism, more poetical, on the contrary throws a light of love over the visible forms, in which the will and lessons of the divine soul are enshrined. Its will, for the hidden force which brings the crystal, the rock, the flower and the human face to their intrinsic perfection, is a portion of and directly issues from the Intention which has created the world, and preserves it; its lessons, for man's life and the labour of his hands have no other duty, no higher ideal, than to realize in themselves the order God has appointed; and this order is essentially the same for all creatures. Inferiority always rests with matter, the body, what appeals to the senses and only to them; superiority with form, the idea, what appeals to the soul. Interpreted as it ought to be, this world is pregnant with a meaning which the mind only can grasp; and all its parts are symbols. The artist shall enjoy the glorious scenery nature displays around him; he shall drink up the beauty of the fleeting cloud, of the motionless pure peaks, the endlessly varied hues of stones and flowers, the gracefulness of each detail and the harmony of the whole in trees and animals; but his emotion will not be artistic,

Digitized by Google

unless it goes beyond mere sensation, and, imbued with intelligence and awe, ends in adoration.

To this gospel of Art, the inspired, thrilling exegesis, the full and biblical eloquence of Ruskin bring unceasing support and confirmation. The history of painting and that of architecture abundantly teach the same lesson. The painters of the soul have been the greatest of all; the simple buoyant faith, the sincere technique of the early Italian painters were naturally expressed by their fresh, pure colour, a joy to the eye and to the heart; on the contrary, the sensuous degeneration and artificial refinement of their unworthy heirs go along with a dark, dull colouring. What constitutes Turner's unique greatness, is that he has painted nature with a more clear-sighted vision, a deeper and more humble passion than any other; he has done better because he felt more, he has felt more because he loved better. In the same way do buildings contain the worst or the best elements of the human mind within their fresh or faded stones; their outlines, their proportions and ornaments reveal a civilization, express a faith, and their value is gauged by the generosity of this faith. No architecture is more beautiful than that of Gothic churches; for in it bloom out, with the living belief of a whole people, the absolute devotion and sincerity of artists enamoured of their work, and the minutely accurate imitation of patterns supplied by nature. The palaces and domes of Venice still echo the anthem of the past, and proclaim, in glorious unison, the courage and the faith which built up her greatness of yore;

Digitized by Google

the downfall of her strength and that of her art are both written out in the sensuous languidness of her painters.

What is, then, the necessary condition, that the English soil may produce an artistic harvest finer, richer than any other? The laws of art have taught Ruskin those of life, for life is the very principle of beauty; his gospel of art widens into a moral doctrine. Thus the current of his thoughts retraces the course it had followed; more deeply than in æsthetic enthusiasm, its source lies in mystical and puritan fervour.

What must the English people do in order to feel and to create the beautiful? It must revive in itself the religious soul of the beautiful. Let its national life rise again to the level of Christian zeal, of public devotion it reached in the Middle Ages; let art find a firm basis in generous and widespread collective feelings. Let the artist work lovingly, and let his hand be guided by an earnest desire for truth. No lying; each piece must be fitted for its particular end; each ornament must have its justification and its use; each detail be as finished as the whole. The matter must be precious, not common and vile; the style pure and not adulterated; the decoration realistic and not fanciful; the technique bold and sincere rather than clever. More than anything else the unfeeling, unconscious working of machinery is hateful; only man's life can impart life to things. Industry, the queen of modern society, has ruined art; that art may revive, industry must be curbed and driven back to its own field. And in the

Digitized by Google

same way that a reform of mind and heart was to precede the renaissance of art, a reform of the social order and of civilization itself will alone make possible the regeneration of the heart.

It was shortly after 1850 that the first lineaments of Ruskin's social gospel came out through his artistic preaching. During the quiet years of the middle Victorian period, the apostle of the beautiful went on inveighing against the times; and his growing influence was confronted by the stubborn resistance of startled optimism and threatened interests. With an eager eloquence, he assailed the dogmas of political economy. He charged this code of the principles of money-making with the degradation of the capitalist whom it debased and of the wage-earner whom it enslaved. The whole system of Ricardo was based on an over-simplification, an impoverishment of man and of collective life. It was by an undue abstraction that the conflicting motives and desires were considered in their stripped nakedness; reclothed with flesh and blood, economic entities no longer comply with the arithmetical combinations of science; and if, moreover, a soul is given back to these living bodies, they are thenceforth raised to a higher and different order, the order of minds, the awful vital suggestions of which run counter to the despotic commands of mere self-seeking. No social science without a broad, human notion of man. And, passing on to positive affirmations, Ruskin opposes an intuitive theory of value to Ricardo's materialism.

There is no wealth but life. That country is

Digitized by Google

most wealthy which supports the greatest number of happy and noble human beings. The connection of the doctrine with all the moral and physical complexity of social life being thus re-established, it is carried from the rational and over-simplified plane on which the utilitarian thinkers had kept it, to a concrete and instinctive feeling of the living realities with which it must deal. Thenceforth the ground was cleared for a truly objective sociology, able to encompass the problem of social life, with all its elements and data. And in the English mind which was then awaking to social compunction, as well as to a desire for charitable action, Ruskin's influence, confirming that of Carlyle, helped on the consciousness of solidarity, and that inner detachment from economic dogmatism whence an interventionist opinion silently issued.

In the more precise schemes of reform to which Ruskin devoted himself with impatient eagerness the deep affinity of his thought with Carlyle's is more apparent still. His wishes aim at rebuilding an authoritative hierarchical order, ruled by the old disciplines, in which the individual only exists for the sake of the community. Verging on State Socialism by the supreme and beneficent influence it grants the central power, his doctrine preserves its conservative and feudal character by maintaining the privileged classes and the élite; in it, an exacting spirit of Christian idealism enforces the Ten Commandments with a strictness quite savouring of theocracy. The State shall see to the fairness of the relations between

Digitized by Google

captains and soldiers of labour; its control shall be exercised by inspectors; but its function shall be mainly moral. Every year, each householder shall give an account of the events that have occurred in his home; there shall be for each hundred families one spiritual overseer, supervising the religious discipline and mental hygiene without which there can be no health for the individual or the race. The noble families, nevertheless, shall keep their standing and their lands; but as their patriarchal dignity will not allow of mercenary pursuits, their lands shall not be cultivated, and their incomes shall be provided by the State. In each human aggregate, the leading functions shall rest with the natural chiefs—those whom birth, education, an evident superiority, have fitted for authority. Submitted again, as far as possible, to the healthy influences of the country and the open air, industry shall return to the old type of home work; the family, the true social unit, shall be the economic cell as well. Man shall no longer be a machine, his labour shall no longer partake of the monotonous mind-destroying rhythm of connecting-rods and cranks; things shall derive all their value from the amount of life and soul they imply, and handicrafts, as of old, shall fashion homely objects and works of art in an atmosphere of joy and love. The revived guilds shall jealously uphold the honour of trade and the pride of traditions; each of them shall guarantee the wares offered for sale, and set their prices according to the scale of that real value, life.

Digitized by Google

These mystical dreams and schemes have not withstood the onslaughts of irony or the protests of common sense; however, the spirit of these doctrines has thoroughly permeated the two generations which have felt their influence; and contemporary English life is instinct with it.

As early as the middle of the Victorian era, the reforming impulse given by Ruskin combined with that of Carlyle, with all the forces of the instinctive reaction, to repress the vices of industrial society. But it was chiefly as a prophet of the beautiful that Ruskin influenced this period. His æsthetic propaganda fell in with an artistic and literary movement, Pre-Raphaelitism, the rise of which his first books, indeed, favoured. A young active group of poet-painters, about 1850, undertook to instil a new life into English art; they looked for their models among those early Italian painters Ruskin had discovered, and set the sincere inspiration, the simple technique of these masters in contrast with the elaborate trite artificiality of English Academic painting. They were animated with that same zeal and faith which had roused Ruskin to write the *Stones of Venice;* they wished to root out from art the hypocrisy which had flourished in it ever since the Renaissance; to implant in it, on the contrary, that deep-felt devotion, that straightforward candour which bloomed out in the pictures of Fra Angelico or Luini. And as an earnest idealism will spontaneously radiate from a believing soul, and steep the material aspects of things in spirituality, they naturally tended to enrich their mystical repre-

Digitized by Google

sentation with that symbolism which Ruskin regarded as the secret language of the universe. To this sincerity, lastly, to this Christian humility and this symbolism, necessarily answered a scrupulous attention to details; they fondly painted those tiny wonders of each plant, each flower, each petal, which Ruskin's impassioned investigations had brought to light, and preserved all the specific particularities of their characters and forms.

Thus rose and grew the school of art to which we owe the masterpieces of Rossetti, Millais and Burne-Jones. Various sources of inspiration swelled or altered in its course that main current of theory and enthusiasm; especially noteworthy was the contribution of the mediæval feeling, of the chivalrous archaic ideal, as the romantic imagination had revived it. From this point of view, whilst the Pre-Raphaelite movement constituted a realistic reaction, it continued romanticism in art after it had spent itself in literature. The same process of development occurred pretty generally at that time; one might say that in England about the middle of the century the seeds scattered forty years before by the romantic return to the past had struck root and were flourishing in the moral, artistic and social fields. This reactionary bent, as it were, of feeling and imagination; had first appeared in Scott's novels; it grew more prominent in the comparison instituted by Carlyle between the present and the past. It was no less conspicuous in the doctrines of the Puseyites, and in their preference for the traditional rites of worship. It was the very soul of

Digitized by Google

Ruskin's æsthetic theory, and gave his social gospel its special bias. Diffused everywhere, this spirit of emotional regression permeated also the paintings of a Burne-Jones; and it seems as if the mediæval inspiration, the more or less openly confessed effort to rebuild on the old basis either society or art which rationalist individualism had equally disintegrated, were the most essential element of that moral synthesis we call here the revenge of instinct.

It is impossible to pass over in silence the ever-widening consequences of the æsthetic renaissance about the end of the century, and its influence over English art at large, the industrial and decorative arts, dress, furniture, life itself. But this aspect of contemporary England centres round the predominant personality of W. Morris, who will be mentioned further on. A few words will be said also, in the following chapter, about literary Pre-Raphaelitism.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

LAWS AND MANNERS

I. The amending of industrial anarchy; factory and labour legislation; emotional and rational philanthropy; the reform of social abuses.—II. The movement for the organization of labour; English Trade-Unionism: its evolution and means of action.—III. The instinctive and conservative elements of the new manners; snobbery; the Puritan reaction; social compunction.—IV. The literature of feeling and imagination.—V. The psychological origins of Imperialism.—VI. The social equilibrium and public optimism about 1870.

THE preceding doctrines and movements constituted a wide complex of aspirations and ideas; these rested in their turn, as has been seen, on a yet wider basis of interests and instincts. No wonder, then, that the conservative, organic and reconstructive influences of all these forces should have taken effect at the same time as the reforming action of rational individualism, though independently of it; nor that England, from 1832 to 1884, should have felt the former no less than the latter. Laws and manners were moulded by the compensatory sway of the revenge of instinct, and still bear witness to it.

I

The vital issue around which was waged the fight of the conflicting social forces was the

Digitized by Google

problem of industrial organization. We have seen what was the anarchy spontaneously developed and promoted by the economic *laisser-faire;* the most ominous symptoms of political disorder and social degeneration resulted from the overwork imposed upon the factory hands, and the general conditions of life they had to bear. State-intervention in its modern form took rise in this particular and significant province of production on a large scale; it radiated from this centre over the other fields of industry and commerce.

In the very first years of the century, the State had foreshadowed its correcting and controlling action, though but timorously as yet. In 1802, after some agitation, a regulation was promulgated; it prescribed measures destined to preserve the physical and moral health of the children employed in cotton and wool factories. This decree remained a dead letter. In 1819, after an inquiry, a law prohibited the admission of children under nine into spinning-mills, and set the maximum working day for children under sixteen at twelve hours. This decision was ignored. During the years 1830–32, in that atmosphere of fiery political vindication, the doctrines and the propaganda of industrial reformers grew more definite and bolder. The spirit of religious and philanthropic idealism, till then bent upon the abolition of slavery or other humanitarian crusades, more resolutely faced the pathetic distress England was finding out on her own soil. Such men as Fielden, Sadler, Lord Ashley, devoted an indefatigable zeal to the cause, and before long they were joined by Carlyle,

Digitized by Google

Kingsley, and other advocates of beneficent authority or Christian Socialism. The Factory Act of 1831 was not more efficiently put in force than the preceding ones; but that of 1833, the outcome of a serious inquiry, constituted the first decisive step towards interventionism. The age-limit under which the working people were granted the protection of the State was raised to eighteen years; and the prescriptions of the Act were to have force "in any factory or mill," except silk works. But the effect of these regulations was again set at naught by the cunning of the employers; as the law prescribed a maximum working day, they devised a system of shifts and relays, so that all calculations were made impossible; the inspectors appointed under the Act were powerless, in spite of the sanctions with which they were armed.

Then it was that mustering their forces, the leaders of the "new philanthropy" won a victory, the consequences of which have not yet ceased developing. In 1840, at the request of Lord Ashley, Parliament decreed a general inquiry about labour. The reports published from 1840 to 1845 deeply stirred public opinion. At this critical moment, when poverty was reaching its climax, England, roused by the call of prophets and men of action, awoke to a realization, dim at first, then clearer and clearer, of the necessary reform. The Mines Act (1842) swept away the worst evils in this particularly backward industry; the Factory Act of 1844, bearing on textile industries, enacted more drastic regulations; it extended the protection already enjoyed by children to adult women.

Digitized by Google

In 1845, social legislation overstepped the narrow bounds within which it had kept so far; print works were submitted to special prescriptions. Lastly, in 1847, the long-wished-for Ten Hours Bill was passed; it took its full effect in 1850. This measure reached its end by the indirect means and the method of compromise typical of the English statute-book. Economic dogmas were still so powerful, that the legislator dared not openly intervene in the normal agreement between the employer and the workman; adults were not explicitly included in the provisions of the law; only weaker beings, in a condition of patent social inferiority, women and children, were protected against the consequences of their weakness. But the mutual dependence of tasks, in that concatenation of parallel activities constituted by the factory, made it impossible to deprive one class of workmen of the benefit of the law, whilst others enjoyed it; and thus the ten hours day became the rule, as early as the middle of the century, in the most prosperous and most typical English industries.

The history of factory legislation was thenceforward less eventful. Though the private interests threatened by the control of the State still opposed each new extension of its domain, the spirit of intervention no longer met with the same impassioned resistance from the Liberal doctrinaires. Public opinion, enlightened by social literature and the official reports, stirred by the appeals of the reformers, was all the more readily led to welcome that widening of the scope of legislation, as the effects of previous measures in the already

Digitized by Google

conquered provinces of labour were more obviously successful. The lesson of experience, ever listened to in England, justified the men of instinct and feeling in their conflict with the men of principles. Along with the material and moral standard of the workmen's life rose the stability of production, and in most cases the prosperity of industry. The new system did not bring about the baleful economic consequences predicted by the advocates of *laisser-faire;* and factory inspection did not prove fatal to that independence which mill-owners were so anxious to preserve.

So this movement developed steadily and more peacefully during the second period of the Victorian era. The advance of legislation mainly consisted thenceforth in a progress from the main centres to the minor regions of industrial activity; so that, through successive assimilations, the advantage of the provisions first enacted for textile industry might be extended to analogous or dependent industries. Before long even these bounds were set aside; the definition of the factory, implying the concerted labour of a large number of workmen, was widened in order to include the workshop, in which the operations of minor industries were carried out; and an inner necessity impelled legal protection to encompass all the forms of labour, however distantly akin they might be to spinning and weaving, the original focus of legislative intervention. The chief stages in this development were marked by the second general inquiry on the employment of children (1861–66), which brought to light, besides the abuses pre-

Digitized by Google

viously revealed, the unknown hardships and cruelties of countless small handicrafts; by the two Acts of 1867, the former of which added iron-works, paper, glass and tobacco manufactures, among others, to the domain of legal protection, whilst the latter (Workshop Regulation Act) dealt explicitly with workshops, so that the whole field of industrial production was then encompassed; by the 1874 Act, in which the influence of Trade Unions, taking in hand the cause of labour, was for the first time discernible; by the Report which a new Commission published in 1876, and by the Act of 1878, which aimed at knitting together and organizing these diverse previous measures.

Thus, about 1880, the laws for the protection of labour rose like a stately fabric of social wisdom. But the stamp of their origin and history, and that of traditional English empiricism, were printed on every aspect of them. Guided by an obscure, blind instinct of justice or prudence, their growth had been uninfluenced by any principle or system. Successive and ever incomplete victories of emotional perception and concrete imagination over the resistance of selfishness or abstract logic, they were in no wise indebted to this logic, and recalled the older political structures in which England still sheltered her action and her life. But the definite, entirely modern objects those laws dealt with seemed to require a more systematic and conscious method. Industrial operations, the problems they implied, all the difficulties raised by the sudden apparition, in England, of the new world of factories and the new race of workmen, seemed to

Digitized by Google

require of the legislation which concerned them some of the scientific spirit with which they were themselves imbued. Precedents, that normal fountain-head of English law, were wanting here; and the glaring crude light cast by the red blaze of furnaces upon the serfdom of the factories awoke in the hearts of the men they enslaved a more impatient and eager desire for justice.

Therefore the code of labour, made up piecemeal, without any preconceived notion, from 1830 to 1880, struck unprejudiced minds as an imperfect instrument. Sufficiently developed on some points, very incomplete on others; unequally covering the various provinces of the same industry; sometimes aggravating the abuses it aimed at destroying, or giving rise to new ones; rife with inconsistencies and even contradictions, it might succeed in correcting the worst excesses of economic individualism; it afforded a material proof of the practical superiority of intervention over indifference; it failed either to cure all evils, or to make a uniform standard of humanity and decency prevail everywhere. The laws relating to industry did not obviously constitute a definitive achievement.

Besides these laws, the reform of other social abuses, the alleviation of suffering, proceeded on an extensive scale, under the influence of philanthropic feelings and of the doctrines of collective action. The humanitarian measures inspired by the revenge of instinct were thus bound up through their consequences, and sometimes more directly through their supporters, with the liberal reforms

Digitized by Google

of society suggested by the philosophic Radicals. On several points, the two main currents of energy and ideas whose ebb and flow fill up that period of English history came in contact with each other. However far apart their sources and directions, these two streams watered the same ground; and the same men sometimes drew from both. They kept none the less distinct; and though their effects converged or combined as often as they compensated or destroyed one another, the measures which originated in one or the other are almost always recognizable at first sight. The salient feature of rationalist philanthropy was its anxious pursuit of logical justice and of a better organization; the idealist or emotional philanthropy was characterized by its preference for immediate and concrete action, for entirely spontaneous processes. A type of the former kind of reforms is to be found in the series of Reform Acts (1832–67–84), which showed a continuous, regular, straight advance, and finally, by means of three stages, established almost universal suffrage. A type of the latter kind would be afforded by these very labour laws; they are signs of a groping progress, towards an uncertain goal, dimly perceived even by those who aimed at it; they were in perfect agreement with the traditional instincts of the English mind.

From 1830 to 1880, a great number of blemishes were blotted out by the latter philanthropy as well as by the former. In 1845, for instance, lunatic asylums were submitted to the control of the State; a new and more humane spirit in all dealings with

Digitized by Google

II

While the reforming action of instinct was taking effect in the ruling classes, for the benefit of social conservation and peace, the working class reacted on its own plane, to its own advantages, against the deadly consequences of economic anarchy. Leaving aside Chartism, that unsuccessful attempt at a revolutionary organization, Trade Unionism constituted, from 1830 to 1880, the spontaneous reaction of the working masses and their effort towards organic reconstruction.

This was an effort of instinctive experimental wisdom, in which theory had no share. On the contrary, it was by giving up the vague theoretical ambitions of their youth that the Unions rose on a firm lasting basis. Everybody knows how they were born, in the eighteenth century, quite a new departure in themselves, from the needs of collective action brought about by the industrial revolution. Sternly prohibited by the law under the name of "combinations," they were granted their franchise, as has been seen, by the philosophic Radicals in 1824. At once began, during the critical years from 1829 to 1848, their revolutionary period. Deeply permeated by Owenism, caught in a few cases by the Chartist movement, the working men's associations, which then assumed for the first time the name of "Trade Unions," indulged in the dream of a federation of all trades, in view of a general strike. Violence was met by violence; this was the time when the

Digitized by Google

government sentenced to transportation the Dorchester labourers, guilty of having been sworn in to a national union; when employers demanded a written declaration of their men, to the effect that they did not belong to any association.

After the breakdown of those desperate attempts, the most famous of which was that of 1834, after spasmodic revivals, relapsing into depression, the permanent elements of social organization contained in those confused agitations disentangled themselves and grew more definite. Owen's propaganda found its outcome in co-operation; and enlightened by the failure of the associations for production, co-operators discovered in associations for consumption the form of practical solidarity best fitted to prepare the way for an economic fraternity. In 1844 was founded the Co-operative Society of the Rochdale Pioneers, a model to so many others. Meanwhile, in the province of labour organization, various influences favoured the constitution of a new type; such were the attenuation of political differences after 1848, the progress of trade and of national prosperity, the conversion of most Trade Unionists to the Liberal economic ideas, spread far and wide by Ricardo's disciples; and the increasing ascendency of the Printers' Unions, won over from an early date to a peaceful and methodical policy. In 1851 was organized the Association of Engineers, which was to set a pattern to Unionism for forty years.

Trade Unions thenceforth possessed lasting characteristics, moulded by experience. They set aside all revolutionary ambitions, and confined

Digitized by Google

themselves to immediate precise aims. Limited to particular trades, and deriving strength from this very limitation, by degrees they developed more complex economic or political instruments, calculated to modify their surroundings as suited their interests. The "Amalgamated" Association of Engineers grouped a number of local Unions, led by a central Committee for the defence of the trade; and in the same way were created national federations of the more important crafts. Thanks to the fruitful training implied in the financial direction of such associations, they turned out clear-headed, shrewd, experienced men, an élite of labour which gradually won the recognition of middle-class opinion, and eventually got into Parliament.

After 1861 appeared the Trades' Councils, in which were represented the various Unions of the same industrial centre. The "Junto," a group of secretaries and officials, directed an uninterrupted political pressure against the prohibitive clauses of the law which regulated labour agreements; the yet contested right of workmen to confederate was at last fully acknowledged. This final victory of the trade-unionist principle (1875–76) was made unavoidable by the attitude of the Radicals, but for a while endangered by the ill-will of the Liberal party, still bound to economic orthodoxy; it was, in fact, achieved by the Conservatives, on this point as on many others better prepared than their rivals to accept interventionism and the beginnings of solidarity. Lastly, in 1868 was held the first Trade Union Congress. The yearly meeting of

Digitized by Google

this Parliament of labour was before long welcomed by public opinion and the national authorities; and social peace seemed secured, thanks to the admission of an aristocracy of labour to the free discussion of their own interests. When in 1872 a Parliamentary Committee was created, entrusted with the promotion of Bills advantageous to the working class, the utmost possibilities of Trade Unionist initiative in legislative matters might seem pacifically fulfilled.

So this new political activity was fruitful because of its at once determined and moderate spirit. In the province of smaller daily cares, the Unions had pursued their development, still thwarted at times, but gradually living down all opposition. Between 1870 and 1875, most employers, following the example set by the government, practically accepted the collective discussion of labour agreements. About that time, the English working men's association could be seen in its typical form, with all the originality of its characteristics. It was not so much a fighting machine as a mutual relief society. It brought together in each trade a very strong proportion of the skilled workmen, excluding the labourers and helpers, who constituted socially a lower stratum. Its members, bearing the strongly marked stamp of English respectability, partook of the dignity secured by economic independence. They regularly paid high subscriptions, wanted to support the insurance fund which was the essential element of the Union—life insurance, assistance in case of unemployment, and pensions

Digitized by Google

for the old and the disabled. Such functions implied a heavy budget, a large reserve fund, and all the prudence as well as the responsibilities which attend upon wealth. Therefore the defence of corporate interests was understood by the traditional Unions in a spirit of compromise and conciliation. Strikes were a desperate weapon, rarely used but in cases of absolute need; on most occasions, a settlement was agreed upon before hostilities began. The first Labour members from the Unions brought moderate tendencies to the House of Commons, and worked jointly with the Radical wing of the Liberal party. This élite of secretaries and representatives of labour readily fell in, by their social preferences, their instincts, their religious and loyal feelings, with the pre-existing structure of the ruling middle class; and the prosperity of English Trade Unionism seemed for a while to herald the definitive mitigation of revolutionary appetites.

However sincerely men of a rational and disinterested turn of mind—like the small group of the English positivists—may have sympathized with the movement for the organization of labour, it belonged yet, by its history and its characteristics, to the reaction against individualistic Liberalism. Whether opposed or not by the moneyed classes, Trade Unionism, like factory legislation, expressed the spontaneous protest of a practical feeling of solidarity against economic anarchy. Thus it was, by its inner meaning, conservative as much as constructive.

Digitized by Google

III

If one considers not only the working class, but the whole of society from 1832 to 1884, it is easy to see that the new manners, the outcome of all the previously mentioned social and moral influences, bore witness to the revenge of instinct no less than to middle class and rationalist tendencies. The conservative forces kept their hold on English life; and the victory of individualism was diminished, compensated in every way by organic growths or the survivals of the past.

A foreign observer visiting England about 1860 might fancy he found again the appearance and the reality of the old manners, hardly modified. Gathered in towns or industrial districts, the great business class did not make its influence felt in the wide expanse of the agricultural regions. There, secure in the enjoyment of its immemorial prestige, the nobility maintained its uncontested sway over the country people. It justified its power, besides, by its useful initiative; able to adapt itself to new needs, it often set the example of the social philanthropic activity on which men's minds were now bent. Not only did it intervene in the industrial strife, to support the cause of factory legislation, thus finding a weapon against the rival class of employers in an unexpected application of its patriarchal ideal; but, as its adversaries would ironically invite it to, it looked, near the very gate of its own castles, at the distress of its tenants, and sometimes sincerely undertook to

Digitized by Google

remedy it. If the democratic evolution of the English constitution has proved reconcilable with the maintenance of the aristocratic privilege, and if the influence of landlords has remained almost unshaken to our very day, the reason for it must be sought for not only in the conservative instinct of the race, or in the backward economic condition of country districts; the efforts honestly made by the best landowners to raise their providential function to the level of a more exacting conscience, did much to promote this end. In most cases, the care the master took of the farmer, the copyholder or even the field-labourer was for these, to some extent, a moral and material security against the most serious risks of life; needless to say, this dependence implied some docility on their part in political or religious matters.

The country, in England, is still the stronghold of the Anglican Church, while the sects have gained ground in the town middle class or among the industrial masses; and when the Reform Act of 1884 had given the franchise to peasants, the Conservative party was the stronger and not the weaker for this change. Under the shelter of the stately castle or of the simple and respected manor-house, close to the ivy-covered walls above which rises a grey slim tower, the English village pursued, all through the middle Victorian period, that calm untroubled life into which it had slowly fallen after the disturbed years which preceded it. Resigned to its economic decay as to some natural fate, no longer contesting the victory of Free Trade, it then accepted its doom, and drowsed

Digitized by Google

away into that proud torpor or that slackened activity which to-day impart its character and, so to speak, its peculiar distinction to the old English agriculture. The onward progress which drove the nation as a whole to a more modern and rational social organization, to a more intense life, was hardly felt by it; and its political and social will, collected in the hands of its hereditary masters, unswervingly supported the instinctive reactions thanks to which England, for a while carried away by the industrial fever, readjusted herself to the inner necessities of her genius and her race.

Meanwhile, in towns also the new manners bore in many points the impress of the past, or corrected of themselves, by means of spontaneous growths, the excessive consequences of the forces from which they had sprung. The triumph of the middle class did not modify the aspect of English society so much as it had done in France. One of the main causes, and at the same time one of the essential forms of this persistence was snobbery, a universal phenomenon, but perhaps more especially British. More than elsewhere, the prestige of the nobility was accepted by the middle class, which had in part stripped it of its political power; and from this worship of the ways, the fashions, the tastes and ideas associated with aristocratic distinction, rose a conservative frame of mind in all that concerns traditional institutions and habits.

The upstarts of industry and commerce never thought of creating a social tone answering to their own history and to the economic realities from

Digitized by Google

which their fortune had risen; they strove, on the contrary, to force their lives into the mould shaped by other needs and other times. The aristocracy, as it had always done, opened its ranks to welcome the wealthiest and the most influential of these self-made men; but even such as could not aspire to this supreme reward at least insisted on copying as closely as possible the pattern of elegance and dignity which fascinated them; the rich manufacturer or merchant hastened to buy an estate, and his country seat before long grew indistinguishable from the older mansions of the gentry. Already permeated to the marrow of his bones by the social desire for respectability, obeying a code of laws set by others, to which he only added, for his own small share, a stricter and more puritan moral observance, he proved also a pious worshipper of blood and titles. Direct relations with the members of the higher class, those beings of a different nature, or, failing that, respectful attention and admiration from a distance, supplied his life with innocent, conservative ambitions and joys, the influence of which blunted in him the edge of individualistic instincts and radical ideas.

A process of social assimilation and impregnation was thus constantly going on, reducing to the tone elaborated by the old order the various elements—classes, interests, appetites, feelings—which the new order dragged from the depths to the surface; and through the tone of the old oligarchic society, it was some of its spirit which was thus perpetuated, and still active. It is im-

Digitized by Google

possible to understand the half-democratic England of 1880, unless one sees in her, besides the reforming impulses, originating in the middle classes, which drove her towards a new life, the powerful and subtle reactionary influences, originating in the aristocracy, and grounded in manners, which acted upon the very classes from which those impulses issued. And as the lower middle class shared in the tastes of the higher, as snobbery afflicted even the people of towns, eager, too, to gild their narrow circumstances with a reflected gleam of borrowed dignity, this peculiar product of the modern conflict of classes may be looked upon as one of the great moral forces which during the last century have delayed or modified the evolution of England.

Other feelings, other characteristics, of longer standing still and more deeply rooted in the English mind, were brought into play at the same time, and contributed to strengthen in public manners the organic conservative tendencies which were represented, in the intellectual order, by the doctrines of such thinkers as Carlyle and Ruskin. The Puritan reaction, a wider movement than the Oxford revival, was the no less distinct religious expression of the revenge of instinct. By more strictly subjecting private conduct and national life to the teaching of the Bible, it linked the present to the past, and partly checked the sweeping moral and social changes which modern industry had brought about. Nothing indeed could be easier, more natural than this inhibitory action: the middle class was imbued with the spirit of puritan-

Digitized by Google

ism, and its victory, in due course, resulted in the religious rigour of modern England.

After the Civil War, after the Commonwealth and the reign of saints, the Restoration and the eighteenth century had witnessed a revival of the free joyous tradition of Elizabethan youth; in spite of the fervour and frequency of religious feelings in a deeply Christian society, the merry England of the jolly pleasure-seeking manners had lived on down to the time of Waterloo, accepted and encouraged, indirectly at least, by the aristocratic leading class, whose private lives were often hardly edifying. The great lesson England derived from the awe and scandal of the French Revolution, the reaction of ideas and tastes against the eighteenth century, the advent of the young Queen Victoria, all contributed to change, from 1800 to 1840, the moral tone of the Court and of the whole nation; but the chief cause of this transformation was the shifting of the social equilibrium, which resulted in the predominance of the middle class. Mostly dissenting, partly Methodist, brought up in the stern discipline of sects laying more stress on conduct than on ritual observances, this class quenched the frivolous bright lustre of aristocratic life under the sober uniformity of its feelings and manners. An exacting public opinion, always on the look-out, unanimous and all-powerful, was then created, levelling all individual fancies or liberties under its relentless judgments and censures. The outward show of religious faith and respectable behaviour, real or not, was thenceforth imposed

Digitized by Google

upon all; and, as a consequence of this rule, cant, an already old aspect of puritan hypocrisy, grew, a brother of snobbery and inseparable from it. Literature, the Press, the stage, the fine arts, were subjected to a reserve in striking contrast with the tone of old England; public and private life were submitted to the reality or convention of a national austerity.

This is not the proper place to inquire whether the English people has gained or lost in self-mastery, in inner truth and health, by that decision which its new masters were responsible for, but towards which its moral destinies had long inclined. Let us only repeat that this puritanic tide, which is hardly beginning to ebb away, constituted during the last century one more aspect of the deeper reactions of instinctive adaptation, by means of which England has maintained the cohesion and organic unity of social life against the disintegrating effects of individualism.

We must not forget either another feeling, a new one, the rise of which might be called the most indisputable moral gain of the nineteenth century: the anxious consciousness, in the ruling classes, of a social solidarity insufficiently recognized by laws. We have seen how active, particularly from 1840 to 1860, was legislative and philanthropic intervention; among the causes of this development, we must number, no doubt, the conservative instinct, the intuition of a national peril, and the measures of defence spontaneously decided upon by political wisdom; and no less, the effects of the idealistic and emotional doctrines, of

Digitized by Google

the philosophic, æsthetic and religious revivals, combining to make up a socially active frame of mind. But in the manners themselves, some general moral changes must be pointed out which gave this frame of mind its full reality. English society as a whole may be said to have accepted, about 1850, the notion of a necessary control of the State over the economic initiative of citizens and the interrelations of individuals, even beyond the limits of the legally acknowledged cases; to have admitted that the higher classes ought to take some charitable care of the destitute. Diffused through all consciences, touched with a tinge of Christian interventionism, this new feeling, this "social remorse," was at once an effect and a cause of the theoretic movement and practical decisions which gave the revenge of instinct its social expression.

IV

It was no less clearly expressed by the disinterested activities of the mind. Art was renewed, as has been seen, by the Pre-Raphaelite movement; painting first, later on architecture and the decorative arts, assumed a new character of refinement and at the same time of sincerity. About the end of that period, the influence of W. Morris added itself to that of Ruskin, and the impulse given by these two rich personalities can be felt in the all-round effort English æstheticism is making to adorn with beauty the surroundings of life and life itself.

Digitized by Google

Literature, however, afforded the apostles of idealism the most direct means of expression. Carlyle, Ruskin and Newman rank among the greatest English writers; the first eager and intense, massive and compact, loading with Saxon energy the most Germanic of styles; the second coloured, sonorous, delicate and gorgeous, carrying along mystical ecstasy or bitter satire in the majestic sweep of his period; the third, firm and plastic, Attic and subtle, fraught with sober emotion and restrained ardour. By them, already, the intellectual and emotional contribution of the instinctive reaction had been cast into literary form. But beside these, there were many others who, less original than the great innovators, used poetry or prose as means to convey analogous tendencies. The literature of imagination and intuition, the new romanticism, transformed by an artistic or social inspiration, stood then in contrast with the rationalistic and realistic literature which we considered above as one of the aspects of the democratic and scientific movement. But it is essential to lay stress on the fact that this antithesis is to a large extent artificial; English writers, we have said, are not so much engrossed as those of Germany by the intellectual conflict of economic forces or ideas; and in their more independent sensibilities, the tendencies and currents of their times are more often mingled into wholly personal associations; clear-cut oppositions are with them less legitimate though no less necessary than with others. A novelist like Dickens, for instance, may have belonged by one aspect of his temperament to

Digitized by Google

the liberal middle-class army which cleared the ground for the new order; by his heart-felt religion of human suffering, by his warm plea in favour of the poor, he shared in the social charity of 1840, and his influence was one of the moral factors of that more organic conception of collective life, the rise of which we tried to account for above.

The novel of the time, indeed, was thoroughly permeated with social meaning; and even in Thackeray or Eliot, it is difficult to tell whether the realistic objective spirit succeeded in keeping down a surging rebellion against injustice and an involuntary thrill of pity. But with Mrs. Gaskell, who tried to bring all classes together in a common zeal of Christian charity; with Kingsley, the leader, next to Maurice, of the Christian socialists of 1848, whose works breathe an ardent spirit of human fraternity; with Disraeli, the inventor of social Toryism, one can more clearly discern the characteristic attitude of the revenge of instinct: an open hostility to the systematic application of cold reason to material or moral relations between men. Disraeli, besides, was more than a writer; he was among the first in England to disentangle the complex political tendencies of the instinctive reaction, and organize them into a strong body. The bold synthesis of conservative traditionalism, of religious and æsthetical mysticism, and of the new feeling of social charity, which he tried to realize about 1845 in his novels, was one of the most original contributions that were added to English thought in the nineteenth century. In

Digitized by Google

him grew to clearer consciousness the secret effort of the aristocracy and of the instinct of historical continuity, to destroy the work of revolutionary individualism, by confronting democracy with State Socialism. Destined to a glorious course, Tory democracy was to come to the front in political life at the end of the century; it will be dealt with further on.

The two greatest poets of the age, Tennyson and Browning, belonged to neither of these two conflicting attitudes exclusively; they might serve to illustrate the reconciliation English sensibility can effect between them, and to point out the way in which the most richly gifted and most representative of English minds have since tried to accomplish it. Tennyson carried within himself some germs of the modern democratic Liberalism; his intelligence welcomed the prospects of national and human progress, under the action of reason and science. At the same time his instincts connected him with the politicians of the Young England group who, about 1845, accepted Disraeli's social gospel; and his poems, with significant stress and sincerity, gave vent to all the traditional feelings on which rested the older order in England: the religion of the past, the worship of ancestors and of the old families, the appealing beauty of the scenery and manners to which the patriarchal authority of the nobility was naturally attuned. No poet better knew how to touch with life the imponderable elements, images and emotions which feed the instinctive conservatism of the English race.

Digitized by Google

Browning, by his artistic manner and some aspects of his thought, bore witness to the victory of philosophic and scientific objectivity over romanticism on the wane; he illustrated, like George Eliot, the inner preference which led writers to perceive all things and men as supreme realities; and his illuminating discussion of ideas makes his poetry a radiating source of intelligence. But though he was much of a rationalist, he was no less of a mystic; his vigorous and ample moral faith transfigured all the aspects of life; his deep sense of the events and growth of the soul did not stop short of intuitions and the subconscious; he diffused a generous fervour of pity and love through the impassioned analysis of characters and acts; the spirit of Christian charity which lies dormant at the bottom of almost all religious hearts in England was one of the suggestions emanating from his works, which countless readers devoutly study to find in them moral lessons and motives for edification. One might with good reason rank him with the literary representatives of the mystical reaction.

With them should be indisputably ranked the Pre-Raphaelite poets—the Rossettis, W. Morris, and, to some extent at least, Swinburne himself, whose inspiration and expression, about 1860, were derived from the same principle which had just renovated English painting. This school of poets transposed to another plane the intentions and the programme of the Ruskinian revival; its æsthetic aspirations went back to the very springs of romantic imagination, called up the prestige of the

Digitized by Google

past, pursued a subtler refinement through elaborate simplicity, and liked to clothe thoughts at once mysterious and rich in the uncertain contours of symbols. By its exclusive, sectarian characteristics, by its dogmatism, it throws light on the reaction of æsthetic needs against the vulgarity and meanness of middle-class life; it confronted modern rationalism with the living contradiction of dreams, of history and beauty.

V

Lastly, in public opinion, in the waves of sensibility and imagination in which moral changes are elaborated, was born at that time, from all those instinctive reactions, the psychological attitude and the doctrine of national action now called Imperialism.

The British Empire, in fact, dates from the eighteenth century; older still, the expansion of England over the world, her peaceful search for markets or warlike hunger for new dominions, have characterized English history, as everybody knows, ever since its origin. But prepared by Elizabeth and Cromwell, realized under the Georges by the stubborn energy or the genius of their ministers, governors or captains, the Empire grew clearly conscious of itself only in the nineteenth century. This awakening was made possible by the exaltation of race-feeling and collective imagination, under the stimulus of the same rousing influences which were starting in

Digitized by Google

England a moral, religious, æsthetic and social renaissance. The beginnings of contemporary imperialism indisputably belonged to the reveage of instinct.

From 1820 to 1850, philosophic Radicalism had expressed itself in foreign affairs by the theory of "peace," as it claimed "retrenchment and reform" at home. The Manchester school, as has been seen, carried its humanitarian hopes of commercial harmony and freedom so far as to show a systematically pacific disposition. Self-centred, besides, engrossed by the serious preoccupation of her constitutional evolution, England after Waterloo had entered upon the least disturbed period in her international relations. The colonial empire constituted during the preceding centuries had not been materially increased since 1815, when the Indian Mutiny, in 1857, struck public opinion, forgetful of those far-away difficulties, as an ominous warning.

America not long before had won her independence; was Asia to do the same? There was no lack of politicians or thinkers to accept future separations, or even wish for them. The bond of interest or right linking the colonies to the mother-country was not clearly perceptible to the logicians of Liberalism; their individualistic principles led them, on the contrary, to dissociate those human aggregates scattered through space, so different in most respects, and joined together only by a fiction directly derived from the antiquated notion of mediæval sovereignty. Would not England's free advance towards a better, juster and more rational

Digitized by Google

organization, be hampered by the heavy care of those nations still young or half-barbarian, less developed than herself, over whose destinies she must watch? Under all those influences had been formed, in the middle Victorian period, a current of opinion indifferent or hostile to the tightening of the imperial bonds; the advent of democracy seemed to herald, at no distant date, the disruption of the imperfect and chaotic world-wide association into which England, now conscious and mistress of her fate, had formerly been driven by the fortune of war and commerce.

Then it was that, in the province of foreign relations as well as in all others, the tendencies of the instinctive reaction were set in opposition to those of utilitarian rationalism; and that an exalted, strenuous feeling of the British nationality, an imaginative conception of its greatness and providential task, a respect and a desire for the struggles in which energy asserts itself and characters are shaped, and a more concrete perception of material and moral realities, were roused into being, at the call of such men as Carlyle and Kingsley.

The prophet of duty and of the will extolled the holy effort of conquest, the victory of the Christian over the barbarian being that of good over evil; he directed the starving crowds of the industrial centres to the virgin soil of the colonies, and saw in emigration a cure for the social disease; his imagination imparted an organic substantial value to the relations, till then abstract, that linked the mother-country to her daughters; he hailed

Digitized by Google

between old Britain and the new greater England a close kinship, as they were of one blood, and had one soul. As in the divine right of heroes, he believed in the moral superiority of strong peoples; his teaching tended to stimulate in the Anglo-Saxon race the consciousness of its destiny, and an aggressive scorn for rival civilizations. His disciple Kingsley preached a manly, combative and "muscular" Christianity; with him the practice of physical exercises, the best hygiene for body and soul, found its crowning completion in the worship of war, the most elating and noblest school of courage and sacrifice. The Crimean War (1854–55) and the Indian Mutiny, following close one upon the other, awoke England from her pacific torpor; if the latter afforded the pessimists an argument, it roused the imperialistic instinct and the national pride of the masses; if the former brought to light the disorder and the deficiency of the English military organization, it shook the country with a warlike excitement, and stirred in the veins of the young the old craving for heroism and victory. On all sides, meanwhile, the apostles of idealism proclaimed the new chivalry, the crusade of good-will against evil; naturally expanded, this imperative and instinctive dogmatism came to include the struggles of nations and races; and what Ruskin wrote to rouse social feeling and the pride of being English was easily turned by his readers into a narrow faith in the efficiency of English discipline applied to the corruption and scandals of the universe. When a problem of political justice (the case of Governor Eyre, in

Digitized by Google

1868), set the disciples of humanitarianism and the partisans of strenuous action in colonial matters face to face, with the former sided the men led by principles, the rationalists and "intellectuals," with the latter, the most illustrious champions of religious and social mysticism.

The ingenious theorist of democratic Toryism, Disraeli, has perhaps the best claim to the invention of Imperialism. Before 1850, in one of his novels, he invested the Asiatic mission of England with an Oriental halo; he tried to restore the monarchy and the national cohesion through the efficiency of new feelings, and looked upon the recognition of the Empire as the best fuel for the enthusiasm of English loyalty. Having risen to the post of Prime Minister, he methodically pursued the realization of his dreams, and conducted the foreign policy of England in a firmly imperial spirit. The proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India at Delhi (1877) illustrated the triumph of the new idea.

VI

Thus the revenge of instinct resulted, like rationalist Liberalism, in political and social optimism. From 1860 to 1880, while the industrial and commercial prosperity of England expanded triumphantly through the world, her peaceful evolution towards forms of life at once freer and no less organic seemed warranted by the alternative or simultaneous play of instinctive and meditated adaptation. A temporary, perhaps even a defini-

Digitized by Google

tive equilibrium, appeared, at that time, to have been established between those tendencies, as between the conflicting exigencies of individualism and national solidarity. Though the readjustment of the English constitution, of public administration, ideas, laws and manners, to the economic and moral consequences of modern industry had endangered for a while the stability and continuity of the existing order, the compensatory changes produced by the intuitive activities and spiritual needs in souls, laws and manners were sufficient, to all appearances, to ward off the peril, and to restore, in England, the moral unity and the social peace necessary to life.

No doubt the idealistic critics of English civilization and culture did not abate anything from their vehement censure; Carlyle went on denouncing the materialistic corruption of middle-class society; Ruskin still lamented over the drowsiness of souls and the squalid harshness of the economic system; as for Matthew Arnold, he demanded more intellectual freedom and moral refinement of the Philistines or Barbarians who shared social power between them. But whatever applause might welcome their eloquent complaints, the deep, hidden genius which watches over the destinies of England did not listen to them; the anonymous will of the multitude was quietly asleep; it knew all dangers were avoided and thought all problems solved.

Were they so, however? The idealism of the prophets had only infused into the hearts of men and diffused through social life a small share of

Digitized by Google

spiritual enthusiasm and active solidarity; the efforts of the doctrinaires and thinkers had only imparted to the average English temperament, to its mental operations and spontaneous methods, a weak wavering aspiration towards intelligence. Meditated adaptation, in the drama just enacted, had been defeated by instinctive adaptation; not only had it failed to assert itself, but its action had been surpassed by the reaction it had brought about. Therefore, when new problems dawned upon England, the deficiency of her method and of her inner light again appeared as the main source of her difficulties and crises.

Digitized by Google

BOOK III

THE NEW PROBLEMS (1884–1910)

INTRODUCTION

THE evolution of modern England has assumed a new character during the last thirty years. The temporary equilibrium into which it had settled for a time being destroyed, it resumed its progress more quickly and extensively than before; and whilst it had till then obeyed exclusively native necessities, it is shaped to-day chiefly by foreign influences. It is no longer to her own self, but to the whole world as well, that England now aspires to be readapted.

And it is, in fact, this exterior cause of the adaptation which quickens its pace and widens its scope. So long as the British nation found in itself the decisive reasons of change which started, between 1832 and 1880, two complementary and parallel movements of political and social reform, England was free to choose, not only the direction, but the speed of her onward steps; and as the complaints which urged her on were hardly ever uttered by all her citizens, but usually by one class, the opposition or indifference of the other classes acted upon that innovating impulse like a powerful check. Therefore, both instinctive

Digitized by Google

and meditated adaptations were, all through that long period, dominated, restrained and retarded by the unconquerable and supreme sense of traditional wisdom which instilled into the very core of English reforms an abiding need of conservative moderation.

But from the day when the whole nation felt its vitality imperilled by foreign competition, when even social oppositions merged into the general anxiety that had seized upon all classes, when peace at home became a condition of success in the international struggle, then the unity of interests increased and enlarged that of ideas and feelings; and with a more homogeneous and clearer will, at a pace quickened by an impending common danger, England sought how to react against the weaknesses of every description—lack of organization, deficiencies in science and method—she was growing conscious of. Thus was commenced that active transition which she is at present undergoing, and which leads her to unknown destinies; in the course of which the great historic parties, modified and renovated, have both adopted positive programmes of action; in which Liberalism has been impregnated with Radicalism, and Conservative prudence carried away, as it were, by the spirit of the time, has borrowed something of its method from Radical daring. For the last ten years there have no longer been in England a party of advance and a party of stagnation; there are only forces of progress, confronting one another, various and conflicting; and the nation, almost unanimously,

Digitized by Google

though more or less consciously, more or less resolutely, accepts an unavoidable transformation.

As immediate or indirect consequences of the resistance English prosperity was meeting with abroad, a series of problems demanded attention, for which solutions had to be found. To this common search, some brought the taste and habit of instinctive adaptation; others a preference for meditated readjustments. The two tidal waves which have been seen since 1832 rising and pursuing each other did not thus vanish away, but joined and mingled, though they are still distinguishable; and in the turmoil of an age more complex than all those that came before, men and minds grouped themselves as best they could, according to their several natures and affinities. One may however say that, roughly speaking, the moral and social antithesis the first period of English democracy had raised is preserved in both its terms; for each of the new problems with which England is confronted, a solution of a rational order and another somewhat empirical have been proposed; and the former answers to the trend of thought and influence which Liberalism, by the light of science and reflection, still follows towards a more logical and better organization; the other continues, with a view to an organic restoration of the threatened balance and health, the gestures of protection begun by the revenge of instinct.

On the whole, then, the two attitudes have not changed. But, upon closer examination, one is bound to conclude that the difference between them has somewhat decreased. Not only have

Digitized by Google

the conservative and empirical reactions become bolder, they have, as well, grown more conscious. It looks as if the pressure of reality, and the effect of the opposed tendencies, had succeeded in instilling some of the contrary spirit into proceedings till then subjected to the obstinate preference of traditional England for instinctive solutions. The desire for intelligence; the suspicion of some weakness implied in the haughty contempt for clear thinking which had ever characterized English action; the anxious fear of some foreign superiority, bound up with surer methods and a more modern organization, have to-day invaded the very stronghold of British pride, and destroyed the assurance of a providential accord between mental habits essentially bent upon giving facts their due, and the prosperous condition which facts seemed to have for ever established.

So the desire for intelligence tends to grow predominant in contemporary England; and it seems that the psychological and social rhythm is raising and driving onward a new all-powerful tide of rationalism and meditated adaptation. But here again the secret adhesion of the average minds to exterior necessities is neither spontaneous nor gratuitous; it is facts they still obey when learning how to look beyond and above them. The limit of the intellectual evolution which goes along with the recent transformation of England is fixed by a scarcely broadened utilitarianism; it entirely depends on ever-varying conditions. That higher degree of consciousness does not grow of itself; changes produce it; and in its turn it produces

Digitized by Google

new changes; the reforms, and the moral dispositions which answer to them, are causes and effects of one another. And at the very fountain-head we find foreign influences: the will to keep one's rank and strength, the dread of decay, main factors of that always-shifting equilibrium.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I

THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM

I. The flagging of English prosperity; foreign competition; the anxiety of public opinion.—II. The proposed remedies: the Free Trade Radical solution; the Protectionist cure.

I

THE last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century witnessed the gradual disappearance of the accidental conditions which had for a long time favoured England in the international economic struggle. The decay of her agriculture had been accelerated; the progress of her industry and commerce had been slackened; for the first time in several generations her supremacy in this field might seem endangered. Awakened from her proud optimism, she anxiously sought for the causes of this peril; and she realized the weaknesses of her material organization, the faults of her technique. The question of foreign competition, the measures necessary to overcome it, on all sides took hold of public attention, and various solutions were put forth. Some wanted to stimulate English production, to supply it with better instruments of science and method, to make its processes more easily adaptable; to modify, if need were, the very structure of society, and

Digitized by Google

readjust it to the new exigencies of a market in which victory rested with the most up-to-date forms of commercial competition. Others, carried away by the concrete perception of facts and more directly following the suggestions of instinct, wished to elude the risk of a defeat by eluding the fight, and to erect a barrier of tariffs all round the British land, round the united Empire. The economic crisis is the focus whence radiate, on their several planes, all the new problems England has to solve; and the Protectionist agitation is but the most immediate of these consequences.

English agriculture, as has been seen, had long ago lost its prosperity; during the industrial revolution life had ebbed away from the country. The Corn Laws had at first secured artificial profits to landowners; the triumph of Free Trade in 1846 had deprived them of such gains. Till about 1875 the consequences of this defeat were not too crushingly felt by English farmers; they still remained the almost undisputed masters of the national market. But as years passed the improvements in land and sea traffic reduced more and more the ratio of distance in the determination of prices. Before long American corn competed successfully, even in England, with home-grown wheat. The unrestrained use of capital and machinery in production, a fresher and bolder spirit of enterprise, the endless resources of a virgin soil gave American farmers an increasing advantage over those of old Europe. But even in Europe, the English peasant found successful rivals among his neighbours, more industrious

Digitized by Google

or more favoured by circumstances. The farm produce of Normandy, Holland, Denmark; Continental fruits, vegetables, eggs, butter, milk, contributed more and more to the daily food of England. From 1875 to 1888, several bad harvests suddenly brought about an acute crisis; the agrarian problem at once forced itself on public attention. Modern England seemed to have passed through the same economic stages as ancient Rome; in her wide estates, submitted to the authority of noble families, man no longer knew how to raise from the land the bread of the country; and already the anxious moralist and sociologist fancied they saw, in the swarming centres of industrial activity, a parasitic mob, fed on foreign corn, increasing and multiplying.

But the depression of agriculture was already known, had been foreseen by many, accepted by some with a light heart. The interruption of the wonderful development of industry and commerce from which England, for a century, had drawn her strength, wealth and pride, dealt a heavier blow to the whole nation; the effects of this startling discovery are unfolding before our eyes. Here again America was the first dangerous competitor. She possessed incomparable natural advantages—abundant ore, coal-fields, navigable streams; the ground gained by English industry, thanks to its priority in the use of machinery, to its treasure of experience, to its practical genius, to its monopoly over the markets of the world, was regained by the United States, thanks to their faculty of assimilation, the very newness of their

Digitized by Google

undertakings, an at least equal power of energy in the victorious struggle with matter, a more methodical empiricism, a more adaptable and active business instinct. Relieved by the Civil War from the painful difficulty which hampered their growth, they entered about 1870 upon that period of intense uninterrupted economic expansion which has characterized them ever since. Their produce soon closed the new world to English commerce, then threatened it in the British colonies, attacked it in Europe and even in its native land. But before this attack had been realized, another more dangerous rival had come to the front.

The German Empire, moulded by war, brought to the industrial strife its well-trained will, scientific intelligence, still untouched resources. From 1880 its industries struggled with those of England against heavy odds; from 1890 they won successive victories. Metallurgy was one of the main provinces of England's industrial supremacy: Germany came up with her rival, and now already leaves her behind. Her chemical products enjoy an uncontested superiority over English manufactures; her woollen or cotton goods are beginning to supplant those of Yorkshire and Lancashire on foreign markets. German coal-pits supply some regions of Europe with fuel. At the same time, the colonial ambition of the German Empire expands with systematic and meditated energy; and its merchant fleet, protected by imposing squadrons, sails over the oceans where the English flag no longer waves in undisputed sway.

Digitized by Google

The more modern implements, more scientific proceedings, more patient ingenuity of German production, its habits of thrift and cheapness, the democratic character of its wares, the shrewd methods, the clever and stubborn energy of its representatives abroad secure for it advantages the extent of which English trade, for the last twenty years, has been bitterly gauging. Contemporary political writings repeatedly bear witness to this haunting preoccupation.

From all these causes sprang the economic crisis, the first symptoms of which appeared as early as 1875, and which is the predominant fact in the present evolution of England. About that time the almost unbroken course of prosperity which English industry had so long enjoyed suddenly came to an end; depression now fell upon one branch and then upon another; a series of painful occasions on which workmen were thrown out of work, and of disastrous strikes, awoke employers from their optimism, and workmen from the social inaction in which trade-unionism, grown wiser through experience, had kept them. Since then, in spite of spells of glorious weather, the same sun has no longer shone upon England. Frequent ups and downs, bright fits of prosperity, periods of feverish activity, long intervals of stagnation, a general but slower progression in the statistics of trade, such was, briefly put, during the years that followed, the state of English production; it called, if not for pessimism, at least for thought and anxious watchfulness. One fact especially strikes all minds to-day: the figures of imports,

Digitized by Google

in the commerce of England, more and more exceed those of exports. She sells less than she purchases. A land of vast long-hoarded wealth, of thriving but threatened industry, of lethargic agriculture, she seems to bend her course towards the dangerous destiny of an aristocratic aged people, fed by the world, finding strength in its treasures and in the bulwark of young nations it has raised round itself, but no longer deriving the elements of an ever-renewed material and moral power from hard-fought economic victories. In the garden of her verdant fields, whose quiet the extinct furnaces no longer will disturb with fire and smoke, resigned or alarmed prophets already imagine the meditative sweet peace of her coming decay.

Meanwhile public opinion investigates the hidden sources of this crisis, looks for the causes of the peril in order to discover its remedies. No influence has done so much for the last twenty-five years to promote the psychological evolution of England towards increased deliberation and consciousness, as that of economic anxieties. Naturally inclined to exaggerate in such matters, always liable to panics, for the frequency of which her political destiny and temperament account, she even goes beyond the precise data of facts, magnifies the advantages secured by her adversaries, accepts too easily and too soon the notion of her defeat. One of the themes most often developed by recent literature is that of the foreign invasion of the English market. Since the cheap wares of German industry have entered

Digitized by Google

it, the scared imaginations of many writers have denounced them wherever they are to be found, and even elsewhere. And on all sides recriminations, criticisms or distressing interpretations were to be heard. Thus was stamped on the public mind the idea of a natural inferiority in the industrial or commercial habits of the English producer or tradesman. The reports of the British consuls abroad have supplied this frame of mind with particularly substantial elements.

By the light of this anxious inquiry, the empiricism through which England had so long triumphed appeared singularly depreciated in its native country, whilst other nations, from a distance, felt more than ever the radiating influence of its ancient prestige. It was made responsible for the technical inferiorities, the deficiencies in method which the contact with German competition was bringing out. If English supremacy is threatened, people said, it is because it no longer answers to the new requirements of production and exchange. The manufacturer is satisfied with out-of-date machinery, he adapts himself too slowly to the changing preferences of his customers; he does not early enough apply the latest discoveries of physics or chemistry to industrial processes. As for the tradesman, he still relies on the former superiority of English commerce; his initiative is no longer quick or supple enough; he no longer strives to win new markets or retain the old ones by unceasing exertions. On the contrary, America, Germany, daily infuse more science and intelligence into industry, more

Digitized by Google

method and energy into commerce. Compared with the German clerk, insinuating and tenacious, an untiring observer of wants and preferences, constantly adjusting the supply to the demand, the English agent is handicapped by his slowness, by his traditional and aristocratic conception of business, his tendency to require that the demand should be fitted to the supply. Compared with the German engineer, turned out by modern and "realistic" schools, able to enlighten practice by theory, the English manufacturer brought up on classical culture or only provided with a utilitarian training must too often be satisfied with following the routine of his father's factory, without being able to understand or modify it.

In a word, what this trial seemed to reveal was a check in the growth, perhaps the exhaustion and decay of English vitality; it revealed, too, the failure of the principles, or of the lack of principles, which had long secured its victory. Capable of a passive and fruitful subservience to realities, capable, too, of creative intuitions in the domain of experience, ceaselessly enriched by concrete perceptions, the English genius proved unfit for systematic and concerted operations, for synthetic organization, innovating activity. It no longer wrested their secrets from things, and could no longer subjugate nature, now that those secrets, better hidden, and those natural forces, less compliant, demanded other gifts than patience and common sense. Scientists in the English laboratories still kept the fire of invention alight; but their individual originality could not counter-

Digitized by Google

balance, in the international struggle, the hosts of professors, engineers and overseers who diffused a spirit of scientific discipline throughout German or American economic life.

II

Under the influence of that national anxiety, two bodies of defensive forces have been spontaneously constituted. They answer to the two general directions between which the social and political evolution of England is at present hesitating.

On the purely economic plane, the battle is fought around freedom of trade. But the consequences of the industrial and commercial crisis embrace far more than the question of tariffs; they underlie all the problems of the present; and both the Free Trade and the Protectionist solutions belong to wider systems of interests and doctrines, within which they must be replaced to be well understood. The order followed in this study aims at complying, as far as possible, with this necessity. A necessity which chiefly asserts itself indeed in the case of the Free Trade solution. For this is not in itself a positive remedy; it implies here less than ever an active intervention of political will; it is but a persistence in a state of things already realized, and a vindication of previously established dogmas. After having formerly constituted a bold instance of logical and meditated adaptation, it only expresses to-day, in most cases,

Digitized by Google

an intellectual routine; its supporters should not be chosen to illustrate the spirit of systematic reform which even now, under the name of Radicalism, opposes the spirit of empirical and conservative adaptation. In order to gauge the real extent of the effect of the economic problem upon ideas and feelings, and to comprehend the tendency to meditated adaptation, in its vigorous and active reality, as it is now to be found, one must leave the narrow field of commercial traffic. The genuine answer of English Liberalism to revived Protectionism will be found in the more pronounced bent of its doctrines and methods towards the redress of social injustice, and towards the systematic recasting of antiquated political and administrative traditions.

To fight with the most efficient weapons against foreign competition, to stop the alarming decrease in English prosperity, the new Liberals, imbued with an active sense of necessary intervention, no doubt still repeat the old reasoning of Cobden; it is, they say, by Free Trade that the most favourable conditions will yet be secured for British industry; it is thanks to it that, at all events, the cost of life will be kept as low as possible and free from the unfair taxes levied on the consumer. And, indeed, it is a fact that since the repeal of tariffs, about 1850, the necessaries of life have become more accessible to all, and that the standard of comfort has risen among the working masses.

Meanwhile, however, poverty is undiminished; unemployment grows more frequent. Therefore a regeneration of national activity, a reform of the

Digitized by Google

social organization, will be necessary to cure them. In contrast with the general lowering of prices, for example, only house-rents have risen. It is because an idle class, that of landlords, unduly reap the benefit of urban concentration and of the increase in population; the law, by laying heavier taxes on them, must restore the lost balance. Above all, an effort of will and science will endow England with the coherent and modern system of education, the scientific formation, the technical training, which alone can enable her to compete with her rivals. Thus the Radical programme, this new and more thorough application of utilitarian logic to social facts, appears as the corollary of the Free Trade solution in the wider field of general politics; and it is to the economic crisis that we shall have to return again and again to understand the present position of doctrines and parties in England.

Protectionism, on the contrary, is self-sufficient; or rather, it constitutes in the economic domain a direct and complete solution of the industrial and commercial crisis; and if this solution has been incorporated at once, through natural affinities, with the body of conservative interests, yet had this fusion not taken place, Protectionism would still have remained essentially the same. Springing from facts, it manifests the attempt at instinctive readjustment by which English supremacy hopes to defend itself; but it represents, in that order of spontaneous reactions, a bolder and more conscious initiative than those through which English empiricism had till now found

Digitized by Google

expression; and it clearly bears witness to that systematic spirit which to-day extends its sway even over the conservative decisions of England. Compared with the Liberal logic, stiffened on this point and grown almost mechanical, it is the Protectionist faith which stands, one might say, in a manner, for meditated adaptation. In order to assert itself, it must overcome the force of a recent but firmly established tradition; it must overthrow a dogmatic assurance so entirely confirmed by experience and deeply rooted in it, that only with the greatest reluctance is a contrary experience allowed to tell against it. The conservative instincts, once injured by the repeal of tariffs, have begun living again on Free Trade itself; have grown all round it, and to-day identify themselves with it. The return to Protectionism, an old and traditional doctrine, is effected now by the same means of propaganda and theoretic discussion its adversaries had formerly used.

However, though the new English Protectionism is logically self-sufficient, it is in fact inseparable from another great contemporary movement, Imperialism. The tariff reform agitation has been, from the first, intimately connected with the public expressions and political demands of the imperialist feeling; and thus it is that the scheme of commercial protection is most narrowly bound up with the body of imaginative or social forces which make up instinctive conservatism. The defensive reaction of economic England, to answer the menaces of foreign industry, naturally agrees with the measures tending to a closer material and

Digitized by Google

moral union, by which she intends to avert the peril of a colonial dismemberment possibly expected by a hostile universe. This is why Protectionism, however imbued it may be with the new spirit of meditated initiative, still indisputably belongs by its psychological character and tendencies to instinctive adaptation; it must be ranked with the doctrines and bodies of interests which in all fields oppose the attempts of Radical logic.

Coldly listened to during the years of prosperity, from 1850 to 1880, the criticisms levelled at Free Trade by a few irreconcilable opponents have assumed, since the beginning of the economic crisis, a new strength, wideness of range, and authority. The man who embodied active Imperialism, Mr. Chamberlain, has given them a prominent place in public attention; at his instigation, indefatigable efforts have been made to win opinion over to the cause of tariffs; and urged on by its inner logic, the Unionist party, a synthesis of conservative interests and imperialist feelings, has adopted Protectionism as an essential part of its programme. Since the long-delayed adhesion of its leader, Mr. Balfour, England is directly called upon to decide, in every Parliamentary election, for or against tariff reform. Leaving aside the many points of contact by which Protectionism is bound up with the other tenets of the Unionist creed, one can easily enough describe the arguments it emphasizes and the instincts to which it appeals. From the intellectual point of view, it lays stress on the decay which has struck economic orthodoxy; it points out, in social life, the

Digitized by Google

unceasing advance of interventionism, the development of the functions of the State, and refuses to find in the Liberal dogmas any theoretic difficulty in extending to commercial relations the methods of positive action and legal redress which experience has confirmed elsewhere. Morover, it sets forth, with a view to the creation of a moral solidarity between the various parts of the Empire, the necessity of uniting them strongly by common interests; whatever draws the colonies nearer to the mother-country, whatever facilitates communications from the heart to the extremities of the imperial organism, and conduces to isolate it in its material independence from the outside world, will the more strengthen its unity and power.

In what concerns more concrete realities, Protectionism offers to win back or secure for English industry the command of the national market, and that of the colonies—for Australia, Canada, South Africa, have lowered, or will lower, it holds, in favour of the mother-country, the tariffs with which they defended their young industry, in the same way that England will favour them at the expense of foreign countries. To agriculture it promises the possibility of reviving under the shelter of the tariff. To the budget which the military, naval and social expenses burden more and more heavily, it holds out the income afforded by protective duties. There lies the very core, the vital and critical point of the problem; at a quicker rate still than Germany, England must build huge men-of-war, so as not to lose the margin of superiority indis-

Digitized by Google

pensable to the safety of the Empire; and in order to bear that heavy load, what resource could be more tempting and natural than the taxation of foreign goods? Already duties are levied on a few exotic imports: tea, coffee, tobacco, sugar; extended to food and drink, to industrial wares, those duties will not materially increase the cost of life for the working man; and their produce will make it possible to find new resources, without laying any new burden on capital, already surcharged by the income tax and the death duties.

Thus the revival of Protectionism in contemporary England can be accounted for, first, by foreign influences—the rise of a harsher international competition, the development of great industrial states, formidably equipped, for political struggles, with regiments and navies, and for commercial fights with their customs and duties. It results from an economic contagion, which the pressure of the universe forces on the proud exception of Free Trade, so far triumphant. But other causes, moral and social, have sprung from the very course of English evolution. The body of instincts and interests which supports, at the present time, Unionist conservatism against Radical liberalism, has incorporated with itself the protective system, with its appeal and attraction, as a congenial force making for the same end. The protectionist reform would serve the destinies of the Empire; it would as well serve the moneyed classes, alarmed by an everyday bolder legislation, in their natural resistance to the advance of levelling democracy. It is from these expected advantages that the

Digitized by Google

apostles of this crusade derive the energy necessary to eradicate deep-rooted mental and practical habits from a collective mind always slow in its changes; and it is the acute and quick sense of realities that here supports their bold undertaking. A measure of conscious logic eagerly called for by instinct, this reform may be carried out or rejected, during the coming years, without, in either case, necessarily influencing the general choice England has to make between two doctrines and two policies; it can as well claim the support of State intervention as of conservatism, and belongs to empiricism as much as to meditated adaptation.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

I. New appearance and greater urgency of the problem.—II. Contemporary English Socialism; the Marxists; the Fabians; municipal Socialism.—III. The formation of the Labour Party; the new Trade-Unionism; the Labour Party in the House of Commons.

I

THE nineteenth century has witnessed everywhere the awakening of the social question. But in England, after the disturbed years from 1830 to 1850, the instinctive reaction of conservative prudence seemed to have, if not solved the problem, at least blunted its acute and threatening urgency. Chartism had been defeated; the first Socialist theorists had found no disciples; the trade-unions, satisfied with their incomplete victory, had confined themselves to the limited forms of action they had achieved; and a great effort of philanthropy or legislative intervention had restored, in laws, manners and the conditions of life, the standard of decency and order indispensable to the preservation of the social body. From 1850 to 1880, the ruling classes in England might believe they had evaded, through timely sacrifices, the social claims which had scared them for a while;

Digitized by Google

they might believe, too, that they had followed far enough the idealists—such as Carlyle and Ruskin —to find in the satisfaction of their consciences a sufficient ground not to follow them to the bitter end.

The destruction of that equilibrium, about 1880, put an end to all such hopes; and the re-awakening of the social problem was one of the immediate consequences of the economic unrest. The industrial depression and unemployment were crushingly felt by the unsettled masses of unskilled labourers, among whom the sweating system found its victims; and even the aristocracy of labour, the élite who belonged to trade-unions, heavily suffered from that sudden flagging of the prosperity which had created a favourable atmosphere round those associations. The crises of 1878–79, 1883–87, caused many disasters and much distress. Seen in that lurid light, the showy front of peace and comfort erected by the social good-will of two generations appeared frail and deceiving; behind it, poverty spread to hidden depths, still present, though concealed; an obscure realm, which widened or narrowed according to exterior influences, but never entirely disappeared. The inquiry of Charles Booth, undertaken in 1886, revealed that, in London alone, 1,250,000 persons lived below the minimum standard of human health and self-respect. Since then, statistics have not brought forth more optimistic figures; in spite of successive revivals in trade, the army of the unemployed has never substantially diminished on English ground; the number

Digitized by Google

of heartless, hopeless beings, maintained by public relief in the dismal workhouses, is no smaller; the big towns and the country, despite the zeal of public or private charity, still present the most glaring contrast to be found in modern Europe between extreme wealth and extreme poverty. The rise in wages, the fall in the price of some goods, have been counterbalanced by the general increase in the cost of life, the higher rents, and, above all, the new needs, sprung from the very improvement of comfort and culture. The average condition of the town or country wage-earner, about 1890 or 1900, was far superior to what it was about 1840; and yet the social phenomenon of poverty still appears to-day in England in the acute form it owed, from the first, to the influence of modern industry. And new circumstances, the decline of commercial expansion, the chronic stagnation of business, the successes of foreign competition, told painfully, though more or less directly, upon a class to which its own efforts, or the interested help of the other classes, have not yet secured independence and safety from the risks of daily life.

Thus does economic suffering quicken in contemporary English society that obscure unrest or that open crisis which, at the same time, endangers the stability of the established order in the advanced nations of Europe and the world; and the social problem, in its turn, reverberates in ever-widening echoes through all the provinces of life and thought. Political England, for the last twenty years, has been greatly modified by the

Digitized by Google

deep, powerful influences of class struggles and class claims.

All the elements of the complex web of national evolution are closely interwoven, and none of them can be conceived apart from the others. But, without destroying those intimate connections, one may consider the whole successively from different points of view. The difficulties of a particularly social order which have risen and assumed a more urgent character in contemporary England have brought about two principal reactions in doctrines and parties. On the one hand, the conservative tendencies and empirical traditions have tried to solve them, as of yore, by the mitigating action and the compromises of feudal intervention; on the other, the Radical politicians and the several Socialist sects have carried into practice the reforming principles of a rigorous theoretic logic. Thus, leaving out a few belated partisans of orthodox *laisser-faire*, indifference in social matters has no longer any representatives on English ground; the leading motives and ideas are divided between two equally active groups, one of which is rather guided by instinctive, and the other by meditated adaptation.

In the Conservative or Unionist party, and in the Liberal-Radical one, the schemes and initiatives of social reform are inseparably bound up with the larger political systems of interests and tendencies which support these two parties in their conflict. This aspect of their fundamental opposition, on which the fate of the England of to-day mainly depends, will be studied further on. More

Digitized by Google

distantly concerned with the political fight, and influencing it chiefly in indirect ways, contemporary English Socialism can be considered in itself.

II

About thirty years ago the originality of English Socialism could still be found in its not only realistic, but conservative character. All revolutionary propaganda had failed to get the better of the working classes' robust political instinct; and the only effect of the huge effort of Chartism had been to create in them a tenacious desire for trade organization. Marxism had not gained much ground with them, in spite of the long stay Marx had made in England. The Christian Socialism of 1850 was very widely diffused through feelings and manners; but its power had only concentrated in the co-operative movement, constantly on the increase, and in groups, all of them deprived of active energy; it contributed to make up a moral atmosphere favourable to the now-accepted notion of national solidarity, rather than added its own impulse to the reforming movement in politics. During the more recent years, on the contrary, we have witnessed the development of English Socialism properly so called, and seen it assume a new character of systematic firmness.

This evolution was furthered by diverse sects and tendencies. The distress of the agricultural proletariat roused a movement of agrarian vindication, led by the disciples of Henry George,

Digitized by Google

among country labourers, from 1880 to 1900. Adopting, as Marx had done, Ricardo's theory of value, they accepted all property derived from work, but denied that the ownership of land could be thus justified. Society then would claim for itself the automatic rise in the value of land, caused by social progress as a whole. And above all, by means of a single tax, equal to the income of landowners, society would expropriate them without compensation. In this over-simplified doctrine, and in the Biblical arguments it readily called upon, in the religious and mystical tone of the propaganda instituted through country districts by the "Land Restoration League" and the "Land Nationalization Society," one can feel, along with the new eagerness of social vindication, the old spirit of Puritan communism. Therefore, the doctrine of Henry George, ill fitted to the more scientific conditions in which all problems must henceforth be discussed, has ceased to be a conspicuous force in the recent political conflicts; but its influence can still be felt, everywhere diffused, in the contemporary unrest. It is an element of that democratic hostility to unproductive estates, and their privileged owners, on which the Liberal party relies in its struggle against the landlords; it contributes to maintain, in the hearts of the destitute, the religious hope of a fairer justice, based on God's will, according to which each man shall reap his bread from the land his hands have ploughed.

So, in these aspirations and dreams revive the mysticism and the emotionalism which had, during

Digitized by Google

the preceding period, secured the success of interventionist Conservatism, and on which is grounded, to-day, the attempt of Tory democracy to restore national cohesion through beneficent authority. But other movements, besides, manifest the advance of intellectual and scientific Socialism. The "Social Democratic Federation" is the English branch of the International Labourers' Association; it still adheres to the doctrine of Marx, to which its leaders try to win over new disciples. The psychological reasons for the comparative ill-success of orthodox collectivism in England in contrast to Germany or France have often been pointed out; this foreign discipline and frame of mind meet in the English temperament with obstacles, considered as insurmountable; the strictness and abstraction of its formulæ, its strongly centralized organization, the stress it lays on general and distant ends, at the expense of incomplete and immediate realizations, clash in British minds with the instinct of positive action, of necessary compromise and individual initiative.

Therefore English Marxism has attracted, since 1881, only a small number of disciples; ready to emphasize the differences which set it apart from the other Socialist sects, abating nothing of its uncompromising formulæ, considering the war of classes as the real basis of the working men's political action, expecting from a final revolution "the communistic organization of property, means of production, distribution and exchange," it does not constitute the main line along which is being

Digitized by Google

gradually effected the increasing socialization of English national life. It rather plays the part of an outside minority, constantly reminding the labour associations, bent on a policy of compromise, of the great ends to be reached ultimately. That part, though a secondary one, is not devoid of efficiency; the collectivist candidates, though none of them has yet forced his way into Parliament, have not all met with overwhelming defeats in recent elections; and in the unsettled atmosphere of the last years, under the pressure of the economic and moral influences which urge England on towards bolder and more conscious adaptations, the small Marxist sect has somewhat increased in numbers, whilst its radiating power has been spreading more widely over the working class.

But far more significant is another form of intellectual Socialism, which spontaneously agrees, this time, with the political temperament of England: Fabianism. Clear-sighted and thoroughly objective in spirit, broadly tolerant besides, readily combining with the Christian Socialists or the Marxists, the Fabian Society might be accurately defined as a reconciliation of the practical opportunism to which the old English empiricism owed its strength, with a decided exigency of coherent reasoning and logic, in which the new tendencies that modify or correct that empiricism are revealed. It gathers together a small élite of independent minds, which found their way to Socialism through reflection and the study of economic facts, and which, admitting of no

Digitized by Google

dogma, only submit, in their action and thought, to a very pliant organization and discipline. Fabianism is thus a variable and individual doctrine; taken as a whole, it is rather derived from John Stuart Mill than from Marx; it rejects the war of classes; it demands precise and feasible measures, and seeks, through gradual stages, the suppression of private ownership of land and capital. In their tactics lies the main originality of the Fabians; their method consists in permeating public opinion, by an increasing propaganda, with socialistic views, in pointing out detailed particular solutions for the problems of the day, without scaring people by the prospect of final realizations; to put it briefly, in introducing an increasing amount of such moral preferences and material conditions into the processes of common sense and the facts themselves, as can prepare the way for the gradual advent of collectivism.

This permeation of the various political spheres, and chiefly of the Liberal party, by the spirit of Socialism, is one of the main factors which have caused the evolution of this party, taken as a whole, towards a more markedly and boldly democratic policy. But in spite of its influence, both widespread and deep, the Fabian Society carries in itself too many seeds of discord to be well fitted for political struggles; unable, for instance, to decide in the abstract for or against militant imperialism, it was split into two unequal fractions at the time of the Boer War. Its proper course of action is in abeyance, and it tends to dissolve into the diffused aspiration after reform

Digitized by Google

and resolutely modern intelligence which it has itself created. Its spirit at least, should the society disappear, would certainly survive it; it admirably answers to the ways of thinking and acting which attract the new generations, bent on progress, whilst still aware of the necessary transitions.

The Fabian ideas have chiefly come into contact with the practical policy of the Radicals in the administrative councils of large towns; and their influence has been particularly felt in the province of municipal Socialism. Since 1832, as has been seen, the organization of public functions, either national or local, had been deeply altered by the successive Parliaments, in which liberal ideas generally prevailed; from the older empirical traditions, according to which ill-defined functions were concentrated in the hands of a few irresponsible authorities, had gradually been evolved a better-ordered system, in which functionaries, often recruited by competition, performed carefully limited tasks, under the control of competent chiefs or elected boards. This readjustment of English administration to modern wants had naturally imparted more extensive powers to the State, and to local assemblies, the most important of which, the county councils, were organized by the Act of 1888.

The movement thus begun fell in with the reforming tendencies of the Fabians, and their Socialism, at once logical and practical. They devoted their efforts to promoting it, and carried it further. If they have, to a large extent, succeeded in so doing, it is because experience has

Digitized by Google

confirmed their doctrine; it is to the teaching of facts that the municipalization of public services in England owes its remarkable development. In London, Manchester, Glasgow, in almost all very large towns, water, gas, means of conveyance, baths, markets, hospitals, docks, burial grounds, are no longer distributed or taken on lease by private companies. It cannot be denied that these attempts have been successful as a rule; they have in most cases served the interests of the consumers, and those of the municipal budgets. Against this increasing hold taken by Socialism on collective life rose, along with the interests it endangered, the theoretic preferences of individualists and Conservatives for *laisser-faire*. At a recent date, a reaction of the popular feeling checked this development for a while in London. It none the less constitutes one of the main forces which quietly effect the necessary transition leading to a more scientific and more democratic organization of public services; and municipal Socialism educates, if not revolutionary fanatics, at least staunch defenders of that efficient Radicalism in which, at the present day, are combined the most active tendencies of old Liberalism with the most practical aspirations of the associations for social reform.

III

But the chief reason why the social problem has come to the front in contemporary England lies in the fact that the working class, of late, has

Digitized by Google

learnt how to strike a middle course between the violent tactics of Chartism, which had been condemned by experience, and the strictly limited outlook to which trade-unions, in their riper wisdom, had afterwards confined themselves. This class to-day makes its proper strength felt in the political struggle, and the "Labour Party" has forced its way into the House of Commons. That event put an end to the traditional system according to which a yielding Conservatism and a moderate Liberalism endlessly succeeded each other, both equally bent on a policy of prudence. So, the simple equilibrium which the spontaneous instincts of English empiricism had created and, for centuries, maintained, was modified with the coming of a new age and became more complex.

The Labour Party is not a gathering of "intellectuals," like the Fabian Society, neither is it an organization copied from a foreign pattern, like the Social Democratic Federation; it is a movement sprung from the working class itself, from its temperament and its practical sense. Its future development was first foreshadowed by an association called the Independent Labour Party; this was an uncertain attempt of trade-unions feeling their way towards political action. Founded in 1893, it brought together men of widely different opinions, equally bent upon action; it put forth limited social schemes; but they were precise and susceptible of being immediately carried out. Its broad spirit, free from any dogmatic formula, well agreed with the average preferences of the British workman, who, though driven by material

Digitized by Google

necessities to assume a more active attitude, had lost none of his likings or habits. However, the rise of a wider, better-disciplined organization, the Parliamentary "Labour Party," has left the Independent Labour Party but the value of a symbolic phrase; it expresses the opposition to dogmatism which still separates the matter-of-fact Socialism of trade-unions from orthodox collectivism; preserving a nominal existence by the side of the new Labour Party, it has supplied the latter with most of its members, in default of the definite principles it had proved unable to evolve.

This transformation was a process of growth. For around the Independent Labour Party, and enriching it with fresh vigour, had developed the movement called "New Unionism." Whilst in the older and more powerful trade-unions was to be found an aristocracy of the working class, thriving, and mostly conservative, the economic unrest signalized by several violent strikes gave rise after 1889 to new associations among the unsettled masses of unskilled labourers—dockers, porters, stokers, etc. Organized after a very different pattern, these unions required but very low subscriptions of their members; their purpose was not to ward off economic accidents; they were meant for war and levelled against the supremacy of capital. Instinct with the feeling of class hostility, the younger unions turned to Socialism; they accepted its doctrines in a large measure or entirely. This spirit was soon to radiate over their forerunners; and the trade-union congresses

Digitized by Google

passed motions more and more akin to collectivist formulæ.

At that very time, the scared associations of employers and the Conservative party, alarmed by the threatening attitude of the working class, waged war upon trade-union agitation. A series of judgments passed by the courts of justice or the House of Lords did away with the privileges the unions had won, like picketing; and allowed such employers as were wronged by the deliberate action of trade-unionists to sue the unions for compensation in money. Realizing then the danger that beset them, the unions organized themselves, and seeing it was necessary to carry the struggle into the open field of politics, decided to force their way into Parliament. Thus New Unionism sprang from the economic and social circumstances, the general effect of which was to give all conflicts a more definite and more acute aspect; from New Unionism rose the Labour Party.

This association which brings together the various sections and the diverse opinions of the conscious working class, partakes both of the empirical English traditions it continues, and of the more energetic spirit of meditated action, one of the chief expressions of which it constitutes. Its dim, ill-defined beginnings remind one of the obscure growths of all British institutions. The "Labour Representation Committee" (1899) was joined by an increasing number of trade-unions, and by such Socialist organizations as the Fabian Society; its purpose was to prepare the way for trade-union candidates in Parliamentary elections,

Digitized by Google

and to secure a yearly stipend for elected candidates, the payment of members having not yet been accepted by Parliament. It had no theoretic programme; but soon the pressure of events and its inner logic drove it to adopt Socialist formulæ. It was only after the 1906 election had brought thirty Labour members and a score of Labour-Liberals to the House of Commons, along with a very large Liberal majority, that the name of Labour Party, first proposed at the Newcastle Conference in 1903, was proclaimed before the nation.

Nor did the new party, when engaged in the political struggle, show the strict discipline or the unity of belief which are, for instance, characteristic of the German Social Democrats. It remains, upon the whole, impervious to the notion of class war; its members easily reconcile their demands with loyalty to the Crown, to the Established Church, to the necessities of national defence; free from all Marxist irreconcilability, and therefore denounced by the leaders of the Social Democratic Federation, they pursue an opportunist policy with a view to material results.

However, when one takes a general view of the Labour Party, one cannot but detect in it a more and more clearly perceptible approximation towards the Continental aspects of the working class agitation; the social problem, since the rise of the party, has assumed a more pressing and acute character. Adhesions to socialistic principles are daily more numerous among its members; at the Hull Congress, in 1908, a collectivist motion was passed by a majority of the delegates. Inde-

Digitized by Google

pendent, and in no way tied down to any of the traditional parties, it does not sacrifice its freedom of action to the Liberals; and though it ungrudgingly grants them its support on many an occasion, its representatives sit, to whatever party the ministry may belong, on the opposition benches. Its successes can but encourage it to adhere to that policy; as early as 1906, Parliament acknowledged the financial irresponsibility of trade-unions in cases of strikes, and settled their legal status; in 1908, most of the "Labour-Liberals," yielding to a superior power of attraction, joined their Labour colleagues. In spite of its relative failure in the first 1910 election, the party issued from it in a more homogeneous and united condition; its moral influence is in no way weakened, and it plays the part of a first-rate force in the present great constitutional crisis.

Against the hereditary Chamber, the focus of the opposition to social progress, it not only nurses the natural grudge of the democracy of labour; it must also defend its own still threatened existence; a judgment of the Lords, by making illegal the subscriptions of trade-unions to the fund of the Labour Party, forced it to press energetically its claim to the official acknowledgment of that right. Demanding as preliminary reforms effective universal suffrage, the nationalization of land and railways, free meals for school children, a Workmen's Compensation Act; numbering in 1910 nearly 1,500,000 members; loyal to Free Trade, and denouncing Protectionism as the doctrine of dear bread; reaping, in a word, the advantages of

Digitized by Google

a definite programme and a firm though not revolutionary action, the Labour Party seems destined to wield the influence of an energetic compact minority over the ruling majority. In it are best focused the tendencies making for systematic progress whose impulse modern England is inevitably bound to follow, being awakened by the new difficulties from her slow habits of spontaneous adaptation.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL PROBLEM

I. The contemporary evolution of parties; Home Rule and the dissenting Liberals; the rise of the Unionist party; its tendencies.—II. The crisis of Liberalism and its new awakening; the Radical elements of the Liberal party; the heterogeneous character of its tendencies.—III. The recent political conflict; its causes and possible consequences.

THE growth of the Labour Party meant for England a deep modification of her political life. But even before it appeared there had begun, in the old traditional parties, and within the scope of their regular alternation, a crisis which fully echoed the economic conflicts and the wide problems of the new age. Once already, the 1830 Whigs and Tories had been rejuvenated, after the first Reform Act, as Liberals and Conservatives; about the end of the century, after the complete advent of democracy, Conservatism and Liberalism in their turn underwent necessary transformations. The former grew better defined, organized itself round particular standpoints as centres of defence or political action, and became Unionism; the latter, though it kept its name, assimilated new tendencies, borrowed from more precise doctrines; weakened by an inner process of decay, it regenerated itself through the efficient virtue of principles

Digitized by Google

of positive action, and adopted the social programme of Radicalism. Lastly, the unavoidable conflict between the conservative tradition of English empiricism, and the need of more sweeping reforms awakened by the conscious democracy, set the hereditary Chamber in opposition to the elected House. The very soundness of the English constitution was questioned. Henceforth the political drama developed on the English stage; and whatever may be its temporary issue, a period of rapid and critical evolution has doubtlessly begun.

I

The Irish question was the starting-point of the first political change which brought to light the inner transformation of the old parties. By causing the scission of the "Liberal Unionists," it freed Liberalism from its most moderate elements, and prepared the way for its evolution towards Radicalism; on the other hand, it created a new situation, from which a new principle clearly resulted; and round this principle the conservative tendencies crystallized.

The chapter of Irish sufferings, of their causes, of their consequences in England, of the efforts made to allay them, has been for three centuries one of the most distressing in history; it should be studied apart. One should inquire also by what stages, under what influences the Home Rule scheme took shape in Gladstone's mind. Traditionally inclined to conceive in a broader and more

Digitized by Google

tolerant spirit the relations of the central power with the local authorities or the colonies, the Liberal party had chosen a leader in whom burned a generous zeal for justice. Along with the bold plan of granting Ireland an almost independent Parliament, was brought forth quite as bold an agricultural scheme, meant to transfer ownership from the landlords to the tenants with the help of the Imperial government. Thus Liberalism, whose proper doctrine had been exhausted by its victory, was reinvigorated by a programme of positive action due to Gladstone; it extended the benefit of its political principles to Ireland, and came into close contact with the economic necessities it had always too much ignored.

But at the same time, Conservatism too was recovering a doctrine and a precise object for its action and strength. In the course of the century it had exhausted itself quite as much as its rival. Wholly taken up by the task of checking the democratic evolution, of securing the necessary transitions, it found itself purposeless, that evolution once achieved; nor was the alternative of again questioning the final issue open to it; for it had from the beginning accepted it. Surviving only as a vague instinct, or a diffused tendency, separated from Liberalism only by shades of feelings and family traditions, it owed its regeneration to the two new predominant facts in the contemporary history of England: to the Home Rule scheme, which helped the Imperialist formulæ to reach a definite conscious form, and made the unity of the Empire into a national article of

Digitized by Google

faith; to the progress of the working class movement, which transferred the Conservative defence from the political to the social domain.

The scheme granting political autonomy to Ireland met, as everybody knows, with much opposition even within the Liberal party; it seemed to endanger that Imperial unity, the powerful feeling for which by that time had come to be clearly realized. Nothing can be more suggestive than to follow the course of the dissenting group which broke away from Gladstone and caused the failure of Home Rule. The "Liberal Unionists" did not at first officially belong to the Conservative majority, though they voted with it; but, before long, they completely merged into it, and their leaders were admitted, in 1895, into the Salisbury Ministry. Thenceforth, the new element of strenuous national resistance they brought with themselves quickly won a predominant influence over the hesitating passiveness which characterized most Conservatives; a few years later, the name "Unionist" became that of the whole party.

Under this flag, from that time, this party faced the electoral fights. No symbol, indeed, could better stand for the synthesis of manifold tendencies, the coalition of which opposed the renewed vigour of Liberalism; to the richer blood infused by the "Liberal Unionists," was due the greater vitality, the radiating and assimilating power of that composite doctrine. Asserting the integrity of the national bond in the case of Ireland, Unionism naturally claimed for itself the popularity of new-born imperialism; it made

Digitized by Google

military and commercial defence against the enterprises of foreign nations its privilege and special care; and Protectionism, too, became part and parcel of the system. So, Conservatism, renewed under the name of Unionism, is a body of political feelings centring round the cause of social resistance; one may say that in it is focused, at the present time, the preference of traditional England for instinctive readjustments.

The Unionist party, no doubt, has retained much of the old Conservative spirit. In religious and ecclesiastical matters, it stands for the privileges of the Establishment. Like the Tories of old, it favours the claims of the "High Church"; and in the confused struggle, brought about by the attempt of England to organize a system of public education, it throws all its weight on the side of Anglicanism, helping it to secure its hold upon the State-aided schools. Like the Tories, it is as loyal to the Crown as to the Church; the authority of the King finds in it even stauncher supporters than in the Liberal party. Though no longer contesting democracy, now a fact, it opposes the measures meant to make it more real and efficient; the payment of members has long been rejected owing to its uncompromising resistance; it maintains plural voting, and the clauses of exception which still limit the franchise in England. The interests of the wealthy classes are respected by it all the more for the threatening onslaughts of the Liberal party. When the Puritan tendencies often predominant among its adversaries bring them to wage war upon alcohol-

Digitized by Google

ism, it takes up the cause of the vexed publicans; when the financial policy of a Radical minister leads him to shift the balance of taxation to the benefit of the people, it defends the traditional immunities of capital.

The new party of social resistance, with regard to the historic objects to which loyalty is traditionally due—the Crown, the Church, private property—thus continues in the attitude Conservatism has bequeathed to it. But on essential points, it yields to the spirit of efficient reform and of initiative called forth by the complexity of modern circumstances and problems; demanding a closer union of the Empire, a better adaptation of imperial strength to diplomatic or military action, it permeates the instinctive elements of Imperialism with conscious reasoning will; challenging the prestige of Free Trade, and proclaiming the necessity of a return to Protectionism, it proves revolutionary in its way. During the present constitutional crisis, schemes of political reform have sprung from this very party. Unionism, therefore, may be regarded as a more energetic combination of Conservative empiricism with strenuous initiative, due to the irresistible influence of the new needs.

In social matters, lastly, it prolongs the interventionist tradition of the Tories, and improves upon it. Feudal socialism is not extinct in England; many still turn to it in the hope of either alleviating the religious and human compunction awakened by poverty, or checking the advance of collectivism. That providential notion of the duty of the ruling classes, as has been seen, was

Digitized by Google

yet rooted in the patriarchal country manners, in the beneficent authority of the noble families and the gentry; it was accepted by the docile peasantry; it is now being extended to all the provinces of national life. In Ireland the Conservative party, in spite of its opposition to Home Rule, has effected agricultural reforms, sought to allay the distress of tenants, and created administrative institutions to promote local self-government. In England, it has decided that primary instruction should be free, and organized the county councils; it is ready to favour social hygiene and moral regeneration in every way, provided the chosen means keep within the bounds of its instincts, and comply with its inner clinging to moderation.

The expropriation of large estates in the interest of the public, with compensation to the owners, the reviving of small holdings, are among the reforms accepted or demanded by the Unionist party, though its connections with the landlord class prevent it from carrying them out systematically. By advocating tariff reform, it pretends to cope with unemployment and poverty, the main cause of which it finds in Free Trade. The limitations of that social activity are easily discernible; still one should not forget that it exists, and constitutes the effort of a great party, always ready for plastic adaptations, in order to meet the requirements of the present by the aid of the formulæ of the past.

Digitized by Google

II

About the end of the nineteenth century, English Liberalism was undergoing a severe crisis. It had reached that hour, fraught with danger to all parties, when, their principles being exhausted, they must either be rejuvenated or perish. On the chief points of its programme, the democratic evolution of England and Free Trade had brought its wishes full realization. On others, experience had contradicted its doctrine, or imposed upon it the acknowledgment of contrary facts. Ireland did not enjoy the self-government it had, for a while, tried to give her, without devoting its whole strength to the purpose. The Empire, whose ever more pressing claims and growth it had ignored, was coming to the front in political life, and demanded new formulæ, answering the necessities of its incipient organization. In the province of social problems, meanwhile, and in the mutual relations of economic forces and of classes, a moral solidarity had asserted itself, in harmony with the narrow interdependence of units and groups in national life, and State intervention had gained more and more ground, whilst the Liberal orthodoxy found itself powerless. On all sides, needs had been discovered which it could not satisfy, or solutions had been accepted with which its own principles could not be reconciled.

The reason was that these principles were the merely negative expression of the obscure striving after freedom, thanks to which a modern nation

Digitized by Google

had been evolved out of the England of yore. The individualistic philosophy of the Utilitarians, and the impatient efforts of the middle class, had successively overthrown all the barriers with which the old society checked the free expansion of industry and trade; the shifting of balance thus effected had exceeded the desires of the middle class, according to the usual law of loosened forces; and democracy had spread its level far and wide over the still visible remnants of the oligarchic constitution. But, wholly bent on the criticism of the past, Liberalism proved unable to shape the future it had made unavoidable. To meet the needs of a reconstructive age, it lacked organic ideas. Already contained within political democracy, the rough outlines of social democracy came out through it; and, hostile to this new development, Liberalism lacked the necessary authority to stop it. Therefore it seemed doomed to immediate decay; by its side Conservatism was holding its own, still vigorous, fostered by eternal instincts, for it is its privilege to undergo a continual process of change without ever changing; while Socialism on the increase threatened to take its own place before long.

A complexity of causes and influences have during the last ten years restored to Liberalism much of the strength it had lost. As a party, at least, it has known how to modify itself in order to live; and thanks to the happy indetermination which has ever been a characteristic of English political tenets, it has, too, succeeded in realizing such a temporary synthesis as that which the Unionist

Digitized by Google

party was setting as an example to it. First it availed itself of its opponents' faults; the mistakes they made during the South African War made it reap the benefit of that tendency to regular oscillations which, in the normal course of things, brings back the opposition to power almost necessarily. Then, the tariff reform agitation imparted an actual fecundity to its economic principles, which their triumph, now old, had deprived of their former vigour; identifying itself with the reaction of public opinion against the initiative of tariff reformers, it has undertaken the defence of Free Trade, on behalf of the interests of the people.

But chiefly, the Liberal party has been borne onward by the wave of social progress and reform which has risen from the depths of national life. From democracy that still grows and better realizes its own powers, from the economic crisis and the awakening of the Labour Party, from the psychological rhythm which, in England, called for a new period of national criticism, from all the causes, in short, which, at the same time, opened the new problems and, to some extent, predetermined their solutions, an irresistible impulse sprang which revived decaying Liberalism. The tendencies which this impulse brought with it, proved to be alien enough to those which had made up the Liberal doctrine during the last century. Whilst this doctrine had remained individualistic, the spirit which emanated from the working class was one of closer and more interdependent social organization; whilst the old Liberalism above all submitted to the established order and kept, in its

Digitized by Google

political action, within the bounds of constitutional precedents, in its new form it boldly opposed the mediæval fabric of English tradition, by proclaiming the need for intelligence, method, and superior efficiency.

The intermediaries, through which that fresh vigour permeated the old Liberal party, were first the influential group of the Radicals, a minority of energetic, thoroughgoing democrats, whose number the recent elections have increased, and who keep in close touch with the aspirations of labour; it was, next, the diffusion of Fabian ideas, and the gradual conversion of opinion, in advanced circles, to an opportunist and practical Socialism; it was as well the influence of thinkers, who, from the general circumstances in which England finds herself, infer the necessity of a systematic and meditated readaptation to modern life; one should mention lastly the opposition of dissenters, who have been traditionally staunch supporters of Liberalism, against the encroachments of the Established Church and her attempt at monopolizing public education. All these causes contributed to bring about the triumph of the Liberals in the 1906 election; they created that powerful coalition of interests and forces to which are due such bold innovations in the financial and political domains, and which all the gathered strength of the Unionist party has not yet proved able to overcome.

If English Liberalism has been revived, it is because a profound desire for progress and change rose from the very conditions of the time, and because, the Labour Party being still looked upon

Digitized by Google

as politically inferior, an ancient tradition conferred upon the descendants of the Whigs the privilege of acting as interpreters and champions of those desires. Their inconsistent principles could not withstand that influx of new tendencies; and so, individualist and moderate Liberalism found itself saturated with a reforming Radicalism, ready to advocate the intervention of the State.

And the inner weakness of both the party and its doctrine is perhaps due precisely to this composite character; to the incomplete conciliation of the old and the new elements. The attitude of contemporary Liberalism is approximately consistent only in political warfare, under the rule of the discipline enforced by the chiefs. In the abstract, nothing can be more unsettled than its general directions. It has yielded to the spirit of social solidarity, but has not officially given over economic orthodoxy, and State interference is still opposed by many of its representatives. Goaded on by circumstances, it has boldly attacked some privileges of the wealthy classes, and, on a few occasions, the very principle of the existing order; but the traditional preference of Liberalism for compromises and empirical solutions is denounced by the Radicals only; theoretically, there is among the Liberals, in Parliament or in the country, no unanimous adhesion to such ideas or beliefs as would, of necessity, unite them in a common opposition to the Conservative solutions of the new difficulties. The unflinching strength of Liberal action is derived from external conditions, from the pressure of popular enthusiasm, rather than

Digitized by Google

from its own guiding principles; and this will be the case until the day comes, if it is to come, when intellectual Radicalism succeeds in effecting the moral unity of the party.

In the same way, when confronted with the other problems now pending, Liberalism is apt to waver and adopt contradictory views. In what concerns education, it is divided between the undenominational idea, in which the Radicals are ready to find the guiding principle of primary instruction, and the system of equal advantages to all denominational schools, which many others consider as the only kind of neutrality compatible with the present state of public opinion. About the Empire and national defence also the Liberals do not agree. Among them are found the last of the "Little Englanders," the theorists opposed to colonial expansion, the disciples of the Manchester school, clinging to the dream of peaceful international competition, and the humanitarian advocates of peace and disarmament; but on the other hand, the Liberal party in its official policy has shown itself anxious to maintain the naval supremacy of Britain; it has taken its share in the great work of military reform; and many of its members not only acknowledge those necessities of international politics, but feel at one with the combative Imperialists.

Therefore the general impression one gathers from present Liberalism is that of an imperfect and confused synthesis, whose unity is preserved only by the eagerness of the struggle, and the pressure of the opposed synthesis; of a traditional, individu-

Digitized by Google

alistic and moderate background of ideas, not opposed to the slow advent of political democracy, but deeply hostile to all abstract doctrines and sudden changes, from which there stands out in strong relief a Radicalism of the French type, vigorous, socialistic, and not adverse to systems. It is the chief characteristic of the present time that circumstances should have endowed the latter tendency with a remarkable power of attraction, so far unparalleled in the history of England; and that the inert mass of the Liberal party as a whole should have been sufficiently permeated by that spirit to be carried away by it.

III

The acute political crisis which began in 1909 is the outcome of those general conditions. On the one hand, the democratic and reforming impulse which the Liberal party had brought with it on its return to power was bound to result in ever bolder encroachments upon traditional privileges; on the other hand, Conservatism renewed and reinvigorated as "Unionism" was bound to infuse greater strength for resistance and even for attack into the institutions whose part it is to defend those privileges. The conflict of Lords and Commons was the consequence and striking symbol of that opposition between two aspects of England.

The clash might long have been foreseen. When making the political equilibrium depend on the concerted working of the hereditary and

Digitized by Google

the elected Chambers, the English constitution, that organic growth of ancient experience, had not foreseen the modern rise of industrial democracy. From the day when the will of the people was freely expressed and directly felt through the Commons, the germ of a conflict threatened the smooth functioning of the venerable constitutional machine. No doubt, the faculty of spontaneous adaptation which characterizes English empiricism proved efficient in this instance as in others, by realizing the necessary compromises; gradually, in the course of the century, the democratic evolution took place, without any serious shock; the Crown, superior to all parties, and the supreme arbiter of desperate conflicts, intervened at the most critical time, in 1832, to impose the first Reform Bill upon the Lords. Entitled to create new peers freely, and so to displace the majority, it could alone soften down the jarring contrast between the conservative interest of the oligarchy and the impatient will of the people; and about the end of the century there were some grounds for hoping that, thanks to the pacifying action of the Crown, the hereditary Chamber resigned to unavoidable sacrifices had outlived a dangerous period of constitutional change unharmed.

But the growing demands of the democratic spirit, and the daring of the new Liberalism, were to ruin that optimistic trust in the future. Already the "Home Rule" quarrel had stirred and embittered the hostility of the two Chambers. In spite of the patriarchal tendencies of the Conservative policy, and of the active part often played by

Digitized by Google

the Lords in social legislation, they were bound to stand in an attitude of more and more irreconcilable opposition to the reforms demanded by the majority of the nation. Content with simply passing the bills brought in by a Conservative ministry, ready to rest satisfied, in such a case, with merely honorary functions, they would resume their active part as soon as their adversaries came again into power. Since the 1906 election, more especially, their veto had thrown out almost all the reforms proposed by the Commons. The uneasiness prevailing in Parliament, the anger of Liberals and Radicals pointed to a crisis; the Budget of Mr. Lloyd George was but the occasion which hastened the course of events.

The conflict was thus a natural outcome of all the internal causes which have reawakened in contemporary England the political problem like all others. But, as has been seen, the characteristic trait of recent English evolution lies in its being quickened by external influences. In this case, again, the foreign factor was felt; international competition, either economic or military, was the immediate cause of the crisis. If the Liberal government has laid new taxes on capital, it is not only to meet the social expenses required for old age pensions, it is chiefly to bear the very heavy burden of national defence. Challenged by the constant increase of the German navy, England spends more and more on new ships; spurred on by public opinion, astir with the sensational warnings of the Press, the Liberal party must give up its traditions of retrenchment, the pacific dreams

Digitized by Google

of some of its leaders; bent upon maintaining, as the famous phrase has it, the two-power standard of superiority, the British Admiralty gives orders for ever more numerous men-of-war.

And on the other hand, the peril of a German invasion, complacently pictured in dismal colours by many writers; the possibility of intervention in a Continental war; and all the dangers and competitions with which combative Imperialism has clogged the "splendid isolation" England was once proud of, compel her to give herself a standing army. Conscription, yesterday distasteful to all, is gaining ground every day; the regular troops are kept in thorough training; the territorial army, completely reorganized, constitutes a defensive force by no means to be despised. It was to meet these heavy financial needs that, for the first time, a Chancellor of the Exchequer carried Radical notions into practice on a large scale, and levied twenty millions sterling on capital and land.

It would be out of place here to sum up the events which followed the bringing in of the 1909 Budget. Everybody still remembers how the opposition of the Lords decided the obscure question of their rights in money matters, and wrested from the Commons the privilege they had, so they thought, securely held for forty years. This initiative of the conservative interests, opposed to that of the reforming forces, clearly reveals the acute, violent nature of the present crisis; it shows as well how much contemporary influences have roused the spirit of action in the two conflicting parties. Whilst the Unionists denounced socia-

Digitized by Google

listic articles in the Budget, the Liberals had some grounds to charge the Lords with a revolutionary proceeding.

Thenceforth the struggle had begun. It went on and is still going on, without its being possible at the present time to foresee its final solution. The first 1910 election marked a pause in the advance of Liberalism, but did not result in a victory for the other side; the two bodies of opposed forces counterbalanced each other for a while, and the Liberal party remained in power. The accession of a new king still hampered the logical development of the consequences implied in the initial conditions. The constitutional conference met in vain; Parliament was dissolved, and a new election left Liberalism again unconquered. After the truce of the Coronation, the Parliament Bill is now fighting its way through the Lords. The next months will probably witness the victory of the democratic principle in matters of taxation. However widespread and deep the feelings and instincts, however vigorous the social elements of all kinds may be which stand for the present order, in spite of the possible success of Protectionism, the benefit of which would no doubt accrue to the Conservative party, one can but expect that the popular wave will overthrow the barriers raised by the Lords. Whatever the compromise agreed upon, and the degree of independence left to the Upper House, it can hardly preserve any effective political power unless it undergoes serious changes in its composition or spirit. Let us not forget, moreover, that in face

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

THE IMPERIAL PROBLEM

I. The intellectual and emotional elements of the Imperialist doctrine.—II. The programme of action; the ends, the means, and the difficulties met with.

I

We have seen under what influence the imperialist feeling awoke between 1850 and 1880. Growing since the sixteenth century, without any clear-sighted will or preconceived method, a mere outcome of the aggressive vigour and the commercial genius of the race, the Empire became conscious of itself during the nineteenth century. Its emergence into the inner light is an aspect of the general psychological development which characterizes modern England; and Imperialism, the doctrine and the religion of the Empire, is an expression of the impassioned desire for efficiency which is the salient feature of the contemporary period.

But no sooner had the imperialist feeling become an element of the general consciousness, than its realization met with unforeseen difficulties. For the problem of imperial organization is bound up with other problems, both internal and foreign; and the interests of England must in this instance be yielding enough to harmonize with those of young and lusty colonies, endowed with a

Digitized by Google

robustly realistic spirit. By formulating itself, the imperialist tendency entered the political arena. Diffused through all doctrines and parties, it is yet more narrowly associated with Unionism, whose inner connection with it has been pointed out above. It belongs consequently to the body of forces which includes social and religious Conservatism, militarism and Protectionism. Therefore its complete triumph depends to some extent on the success of the Unionist coalition; and the Liberal party, in spite of the sacrifices it has made to national defence and the unity of the Empire, is suspected not to desire this unity with the same combative zeal as the adverse party.

Accepted to-day by the majority of the nation, imperialism is not officially in power. It has none the less for the last thirty years presided over the foreign policy of England and her relations with her colonies.

Around the feeling which is the soul of imperialism, a body of ideas and a programme of action are aggregated. These ideas are mainly derived from the vague evolutionism from which all strong nations, since the time of Darwin, have deduced the theory of the survival of the fittest. The notion of races, widely spread in England as elsewhere, has supplied the instinctive belief in the natural superiority of the Anglo-Saxon with a scientific basis. Nothing more was needed to found the doctrine; its starting-point was the existence of the Empire, created beyond the seas by the swarming of British vitality. It found in it sufficient proof of the expansive, assimilative and

Digitized by Google

commanding virtue of the English race, and inferred from those premises the necessity of helping on, by means of a conscious policy, the full development of that spontaneously commenced process. Other elements came into play: the belief in an imperialist tendency at work through history; the assertion that our era must carry further the political centralization from which modern nations have issued; a conception of the world according to which, whilst the peoples deprived of radiating power must dwindle away, a few gigantic federations—the Russian, the American, the German, the British Empires—will struggle for the sovereignty of the earth.

In a word, notions borrowed from biology, sociology, history, are combined by the presiding impulse of a powerful feeling, which is the common link between them; imperialism partakes both of science and of religion. To religion, again, it is indebted for the mystical idea of the divinely appointed mission of the chosen races—the British race more especially—which sets before them the duty of extending as far as possible a Christian and civilizing order. Lastly, side by side with those idealistic elements, utilitarian aspirations are to be found; the expansion of the Empire opens a larger field for the imperial people to rule and to exploit; and chiefly, industry hopes to find, in the Dominions or Crown colonies, free markets, the access of which will never be barred by prohibitive tariffs. "Trade follows the flag" is the watchword which has brought over most British merchants to the religion of the Empire.

Digitized by Google

Thus the doctrine is very similar to those which a wave of conscious and clear-sighted ambition, of passionate and mystical pride, has brought forth at the same time in other nations, throughout Europe and the world. It is fraught with the same worship of strength, the same contempt for humanitarian sentimentalism, the same desire to ascribe the victories of races to the inner will of the universe, which have fostered the reaction of the declining century against the romanticism of its early years. It manifests, besides the natural growth of the seeds sown by Carlyle's doctrine of energy, the effect of the deep-seated decay under which traditional Liberalism is labouring. The critical formulæ on which the individualistic movement of the nineteenth century was based being exhausted, all the minds craving for organic notions turned to the doctrine of imperial unity and political greatness, as well as to the idea of social solidarity. One can trace, too, in the most subtle prophets of imperialism that vein of pragmatism which to-day runs through English thought, that weariness of futile pursuits, that new indifference to any scientific creed, that preference for a conservative and nationalist realism, which brings together the scepticism of a Balfour and that of a Bülow in a common feeling of respect for the hard solid imperial fact.

As for the particular character of British imperialism, it lies in the programme of action by which its adherents seek to carry it out. In contrast to Germany, England must consider the imperial problem as mainly bearing on an incom-

Digitized by Google

plete unity, which has yet to be achieved, and on the institution through common interests and feelings of a closer union between the very distant, very diverse parts of a single whole. The British Empire is essentially an aggregate of colonies.

II

The first and chief aim of imperialism is to avert all risks of dissension and separation. It strives before all to organize the colonies, amongst themselves and with the mother-country. Federations or homogeneous states, united to Great Britain by an ever stronger and more elastic bond, would best serve its purpose. This bond should be a sentimental one, because the instinctive acknowledgment of a common blood is at the very core of imperial consciousness; it should be political, because unity of will and action can alone secure the cohesion of the Empire under the jealous scrutiny of its foes; being political, it should be commercial, for common interests must cement even the strongest friendships; and it should be military too, for the cause of national defence cannot be ignored by the far-away Dominions which English squadrons may be called upon to protect.

That programme has already been to some extent carried out. First, the idea of the Empire is officially associated with all the public utterances, and all the important steps of the central government. Speeches from the throne, ministerial declarations emphasize the imperial character of the

Digitized by Google

British Crown. It is the Imperial Parliament that sits at Westminster, and the chief instruments of general administration are invested, too, with this title. The Press and literature endeavour to revive and foster the sentiment of the Empire, that inheritance of the race, the pride and care of every citizen, a glorious brotherhood spreading over the face of the earth. The greater speed of communication, the improvement in the means of conveyance, the immediate echo of all national emotions in the universe roused to a homogeneous life, endow the various parts of the Empire with a common and constantly thrilling sensibility. On striking occasions, the tangible image of the imperial unity has been displayed in London, as a manifold variegated pageant; jubilees, coronations, anniversaries or ceremonies, public joys or griefs for all Englishmen and subject races, have shown to all eyes the invisible bond which links together so many lands, climates, civilizations and customs. England had never ceased to keep fastened upon herself the gaze of all her overseas children; but her own sons, once pent up in their insular pride, have now enlarged their prospects and their souls to the magnitude of the destiny of which they are no longer ignorant.

Meanwhile the Empire is undergoing an uninterrupted process of unification. Its main provinces, made up of scattered elements, the natural and spontaneous growths of British individualism, are brought, of their own accord and through the cautious intervention of the mother-country, to more centralized forms. Rejecting

Digitized by Google

nothing of the Liberalism which was the main principle of colonial policy in the nineteenth century, leaving her Dominions their political autonomy and representative institutions, England takes care that this freedom shall strengthen the national or federal bond, instead of destroying it. Australia, Canada thus constitute organic aggregates of districts unequal in population, in wealth, but gradually rising to more perfect homogeneity. Newly conquered from a rival race, South Africa is already united into one State in which provincial grudges will be softened down and the memories of the War will lose their sting, without destroying the local feeling which the public spirit of both Englishmen and Boers is equally bent upon preserving. And with strenuous energy, the British government tries to create an instrument and a symbol for the supreme federation in the very centre of the Empire: the "Colonial Conferences," meeting in London, are regular Parliaments of the Empire, in which are discussed the best means to further the common interests, to make more efficient the solidarity of the sister-nations, called upon to reinforce natural affinities by their conscious will.

Among the problems the Colonial Conferences have to solve, the most important ones concern the tariffs and the military organization of the Empire. The idea of an English Zollverein has become an article of the immediate programme of imperialism; the agitation for Tariff Reform, in England, lays stress on the possibility and expediency of an economic federation entirely self-sufficient,

Digitized by Google

closed to the rest of the world, within which the diverging interests of the mother-country and the colonies would be reconciled through a series of compromises. Though the young countries which Anglo-Saxon energy is calling to new wealth want protective tariffs to shelter their growth, they might at least—and several already do—grant a preference to Great Britain. As for England, she would offer them, should she give up Free Trade, an open market or commercial privileges.

On the other hand, the participation of the colonies in the defence of the Empire is contemplated in various ways. In some cases, subsidies granted by colonial parliaments would be added to the military or naval resources of England; an ironclad here, a cruiser there would be thus presented to the mother-country. As an alternative, colonial forces would join English armies on prearranged occasions. During the South African War, this military solidarity of the Empire was partly realized. In most cases, the colonies will themselves provide for their own squadrons and troops, and will be entrusted with their own defence, thus alleviating the burden of the imperial diplomacy and navy. This last solution seems best suited to the particularist spirit, and the often susceptible independence, of the new nations created by British expansion.

For thorough imperialism finds many obstacles in its path, and it is not yet possible to say whether they will be overcome. The great Dominions, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, are united to old England by reverent feelings of

Digitized by Google

filial devotion; however diverse may be the races which make up those nations, they all own themselves indebted to the historic centre and chief focus of the energy which created them; the more sincerely as their representative institutions have endowed them with full civil and political individuality. But the very vitality of those new peoples tends to weaken the radiating influence of England over them; either because they fret under it, and claim to be themselves centres of influence; or because they yield to the stronger attraction of human aggregates nearer to them and connected with them by greater natural affinities. Australia and New Zealand are so necessarily destined to rule over the new civilization of Oceania that their relations with an island in old Europe cannot long remain essential to them; the economic, political, intellectual intercourse of Canada with the United States binds her every day more closely to the destinies of America.

And, conscious of their strength, of their future, these young nations stand for their rights with all the vigorous individualism and all the utilitarian spirit their Anglo-Saxon forefathers have taught them. The Colonial Conferences have not proved so far very successful. The contributions for the imperial navy have not been very willingly granted; and the colonies do not readily renounce their Protectionist policy. As for England, she cannot possibly sacrifice the needs of her industry or agriculture; it cannot fairly be expected that colonial wheat should, under the contemplated tariff system, be spared the duty levied on foreign

Digitized by Google

corn. And in the conflict of interests, aggravated by the extreme diversity of local conditions, the supreme principle of the unity of the Empire is not easily enforced.

On the other hand, some Crown colonies seriously imperil this very principle. India and Egypt are seething with the agitation for rebellion and independence which the Asiatic awakening and the Islamic propaganda have stirred during the last ten years. Egyptian or Indian nationalists secretly or publicly demand that English domination should come to an end.

Meeting with these difficulties, the imperialist doctrine to which in fact all English political parties, except the majority of the Labour Party, adhere, admits of two main attitudes, which on the whole correspond severally to the Liberal and the Unionist tendencies. The Liberal government sets forth a broader ideal, in which the autonomy of both Dominions and colonies may some day find place; in which the civilizing mission of England is given the predominant importance in her imperial destiny. In India, the nationalist aspirations are firmly kept down, but some satisfaction is granted to the desire for independence and initiative of the natives. In Egypt, the measures of repression are still softened by some respect for the liberty of local opinion. The accession of the Conservatives to power would no doubt be followed by more energetic coercive measures. For with the Unionist party is more especially associated the other ideal of imperialism—the ideal both defensive and offensive of a fighting military

Digitized by Google

organization, forcibly maintaining the subjection of conquered peoples, and raising round the heart of the Empire a shield of young and warlike nations. A natural corollary of this ambition, conscription is demanded in England, as everybody knows, by more and more numerous competent authorities.

Thus the imperial problem first consists in imparting to the incomplete fact of the Empire a more perfect and more solid reality; it consists as well in breathing into that body, once shaped, a soul of peaceful freedom or of proud and martial energy. The latter, needless to say, is better fitted than the former to dwell in it; and will probably prevail, should it definitively be brought to full life. The imperial question is a more thorny difficulty for the rationalists and Radicals than for the disciples of instinct and empiricism. So far as England still demurs at giving herself up to imperialism, one may say that, in this field as in all others, the rational forces are waging the same fight against the same adverse forces, with a more uncertain issue.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

THE INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM

The leading ideas of contemporary England.—I. Traditionalism in the religious movement, in education, public life, collective feelings, artistic tastes.—II. Pragmatism; its relation to English utilitarianism. The pragmatic theory of truth. Analogous tendencies: moral hygiene, the craving for energy, the return to Nature.—III. Rationalism and the new conditions of life. Religious criticism; the modes of unbelief. The criticism of the political and social order; the "intellectuals" and English culture; the influence of rationalism upon education, manners, the psychological temperament, the artistic and literary evolution.

CONTEMPORARY England has to face the last, highest and most comprehensive of all problems, that of general ideas and intellectual tendencies. However small may still relatively be the active part played by pure speculation on English ground, modern life is everywhere, as is well known, more and more intimately connected with the principles of action and thought—whether these principles be only the outcome of facts, or really direct them. Still usually as little addicted to philosophizing as ever, but more anxious to acquire this faculty, the British people experience the searchings of the mind at the present time more than ever before; and an increasing portion of it has recourse to intelligence to explain the course of events, or to guide it. Therefore the unrest which characterized the economic, social and political activity of England,

Digitized by Google

is to be found again in her literary, artistic and philosophic activities. In this field, as in all others, one witnesses a transition and a crisis. For the old order new tendencies demand to be substituted; and even traditional ideas must assume bold, unexpected shapes, the better to resist the attack. The conflict is obscure and manifold; conservatives and revolutionaries oppose one another, and do not always fully grasp the grounds of their opposition. One gathers the vague impression of a moral division from that confused struggle of opinions and parties; and it is in a common desire for active energy, for practical efficiency, that the conciliation of those warring forces tends to be least imperfectly effected.

Ceasing to consider only the systems of thinkers, one may say that life and manners are ever pregnant with a potential philosophy. From this point of view, the general or directing ideas of contemporary England seem to fall under three main tendencies: they are either traditionalistic, or pragmatic, or rationalistic. The second category may easily be traced back to the first; it represents its modernized form, adapted, so to speak, to the needs of the time. It is still distinct enough from it to deserve separate consideration.

I

English traditionalism is in its essence empirical; it chiefly consists in obeying the decisions of instinct; it is thus much more akin to practice

Digitized by Google

than to theory. Public and private life alike bear witness to the unshaken hold which that spirit, inherited from the past, retains on the realities of the present. On the other hand, the various activities of England afford us more definite, more conscious expressions of the same spirit, which by degrees rise to the level of real doctrines. The same decided preference for the traditional determinations of feeling and the results of experience rules over the hereditary manners, preserved in far-off country districts, as well as over the subtle disquisitions of the pragmatist and humanist philosophers.

The characteristic trait of this preference, at the present time, is that it has to defend itself. The offensive taken by the new manners and ideas is no less pronounced in England than in the other civilized countries; a wave of rational criticism has once more swelled in the nation which the revenge of instinct had won back, while democracy and industry are on all sides threatening the balance they seemed to have consented to support. Therefore a defensive attitude is imposed upon all the habits, emotions, beliefs, institutions and doctrines which are based on the ancient foundations of England—the aristocratic and patriarchal organization, religious faith and public worship, the respect of experience, and loyalty to the existing order. Ruling classes, Churches, traditions and routines feel equally imperilled; their authority is alarmed; they are fighting, or preparing for the struggle.

The conflict of dogmatic religion with the

Digitized by Google

various forms of unbelief is carried on in England with an eagerness heightened by the now widespread notion of the utilitarian value of faith, regarded as the mainspring of individual energy or collective will. For a time discouraged by the destructive advance of Biblical criticism, Christian apologetics have mustered new strength since a reaction has set in against the excesses of rationalist exegesis. The authority, the supernatural origin of the holy books, the mission and the divine inspiration of Christ, are emphasized and demonstrated every year by an abundant sacred literature; apparently at least, the theological positions of the Established Church are unshaken, whilst dissenting sects still easily gather the elements of an unsettled subjective orthodoxy from the free interpretation of Scripture.

But leaving out religious congresses, such as the Pan-Anglican conference; or the revivals, those popular movements of mystical enthusiasm, recurrent fires which will blaze in some part of England and burn out, leaving only the ashes of indifference, the most striking phenomenon of the present time is the slow and secret drifting of the English Church towards the Catholic principle of authority. The prestige of the Roman persuasion is undoubtedly greater; the diffusion of tolerance and culture more and more allays the old Protestant hostility, tenacious still and deep-rooted in public feelings; and the recent suppression of the traditional words by which the King, on his coronation day, used to condemn the Roman error, points to some change

Digitized by Google

in the mind of the nation. Conversions to Catholicism are pretty frequent, but for all that, they do not give any ground for regarding as anything more than a dream the hope that the English people may one day return to the faith of their forefathers.

More significant are the slow transitions by means of which Anglicanism seems to open the way for an implicit or public agreement with the Church which, in the universal disintegration of beliefs, makes the strongest stand for the forces of social and theological coherence and conservation—hierarchy, infallibility, rites and dogmas. Ritualism has continued its advance within the High Church; its influence has even spread over the whole of the clergy; the current opinions, the observances accepted at the present time in the English Church, tend to distinguish the priest from the congregation by a more sacred character, to enhance the beauty of the divine service by more august gestures and a more visible sublimity, to trace back the historical links by which Anglicanism is connected with Christian origins, to forbid the primary and mysterious truths of Revelation to private interpretations. Though tapers, incense, the confessional itself, admitted into a few churches, are an occasion for scandal and rouse bitter hostility, public opinion on the whole seems resigned to that necessary evolution; for the classes to which the established religion appears as an element of order and of the national equilibrium are warned, by an obscure intuition, of the vital necessity which drives all

Digitized by Google

ecclesiastical organizations, in a sceptical age, to a firmer and more lasting basis than the free examination of Scripture.

The spirit of political authority is grounded on these strong foundations: the prestige of the old families; the aristocratic traditions of country districts; popular preferences, wherever the new impulse of aggressive democracy has not yet made itself felt; and middle-class snobbishness, now one of the main supports of moral and political conservatism. That spirit asserts itself in electoral fights and the daily conflict of opinions, as well as in the silent pressure of the corporate bodies and institutions which cast the future of mankind in the mould of the past. The Universities and public schools, the army and navy, the Church and the patriarchal manners of the provinces, most efficiently contribute to that transmission of unconscious energy, through which the vanished generations still impose their own discipline upon those that follow them. In the public schools, instruction and education aim at the formation of character and class-feeling; in these schools self-respect, the sense of historical continuity and of the national inheritance, submission to the social hierarchy, and the desire for energy, are based on the clear and ever-present notion of a natural insuperable difference between men, according as they are above or beneath a certain standard of birth, wealth and manners. The students' life in the old Universities, proudly closed against democracy, against the utilitarian application of sciences and, one might almost say,

Digitized by Google

against modern culture, is entirely organized so as to make them the leaders and supporters of a traditional, undisputed order. The old ideal of the gentleman, the religious and faultless champion of middle-class chivalry, the heir of the feudal baron, of the Renaissance courtier, and of the puritan citizen, is no doubt somewhat undermined at the present time; yet this ideal still prevails in the governing classes and in the main centres of social education, from which its widely and deeply conservative influence radiates over the civil service, the law, Parliament, business, and the very tone of public life.

The official proceedings of England are indeed instinct with the spirit of the past. Nothing savours of the modern notion of a State totally independent of religion; every detail in the rites of the Court, of Parliament, of the law, is archaic, antiquated, fraught with historic associations; everything suggests to the eye and the thought an ancient greatness, and loyalty to time-consecrated customs. Attire, words, habits, pomp, ceremonies and functions; the impressive display with which, in London and other large towns, imperial or municipal authorities are surrounded; the Guildhall, the Houses of Lords and Commons, Windsor and the great processions of joy or grief which issue from the castle or end there; everything bears the deep-set stamp of religious faith, of respect for the Crown, of the worship of the Fatherland. The prayers with which the sittings of Parliament begin and end, the earnest, almost devout strains of the national anthem, the litanies

Digitized by Google

which in the divine service call down the exclusive protection of the British God upon the country, the King and his people—everything impresses on the festivals and the daily occurrences of English life a traditional character which the anonymous will of the multitude demands, and which in its turn reacts on the public sensibility as a conservative influence.

But perhaps the most efficient shape which English traditionalism, at the present time, assumes to defend itself, is Imperialism, which boldly meets the attacks of foreign and home foes by taking the offensive. As its foreign foes it reckons all the nations whose open competition or secret envy endangers the greatness, the supremacy, the irresistible expansion of the Empire; against them, against the German gift of hard work and petty commercial intelligence; against the futile bragging and corrupt subtlety of the Latin races; against Russian treachery, the barbarousness of heathens and of yellow peoples, against American boasting, should it forget blood-relationship, the imperialist religion extols the divinely appointed mission of England; and it calls up the sacred guard of British energies, to defend the national idea and the institutions which are incorporated with it. Its foes at home are the humanitarian democrats, the Radical talkers, the pacific dreamers, the men of analytical and critical reason. To resist them, the patriotism of the Empire makes it a duty, for all genuine British souls, to adhere unrestrictedly and at once to the beliefs and hierarchy which have till now supported English greatness,

Digitized by Google

and whose ruin would instantly cause its overthrow.

The imperialist literature advocates the moral and intellectual discipline, without which there can be no individual worth or collective health. The writings of Kipling eloquently and crudely appeal to the feelings, passions, and instincts, the germs of which, innate in English hearts, Carlyle had already developed; but with Kipling, idealism has vanished away, or dwindled into the outward show of a pharisaic Christianity. The revenge of instinct has been stripped of the bright halo of generosity which had shone upon its mystical youth; seen in its bare realism, it is now only the still heart-stirring worship of fighting energy, hardened against itself as well as against the universe, seeking no other beauty than courage, no other justice than strength.

As in religion, politics, education, manners and literature, one might easily find the expression of traditionalism in the arts. In spite of the æsthetic movement started by Ruskin and Morris, in spite of the curious and diverging attempts of impressionism and symbolism, the art which comes nearest to the average sensibility of the race is that which simply serves a moral purpose and rouses the emotions; and the preferences of the English people are still governed by the dear old habits, the tastes inherited from the bygone generations. From Christmas cards, with their artless display of sweet hues and mottoes, there breathes a powerful pervading atmosphere of conservatism. In the yearly exhibitions, the most

Digitized by Google

popular pictures are still those with a sentimental subject, the religious and Academic paintings; together with sacred music, with Händel's oratorios, it is the pathos of drawing-room songs which best moves all hearts; and English music is still a sapless growth with colourless, scentless blossoms. No doubt the influences of modern style and of the new hygiene are modifying the architecture and decoration of the home; but one still commonly finds in wealthy mansions or in cottages the same dulness which reveals cheaply satisfied artistic instincts, the same craving for mere unrefined comfort, the same lack of gracefulness, redeemed by the fresh cleanliness of grass-plots, creepers and flower-beds. Blindly following the suggestions of its life-force, the nation, in spite of all, clings to the main modes of eye and feeling which it owes to the past; and it still finds beauty as well as truth within the limits laid down for ever by a docile sensibility.

II

The pragmatist philosophy can be traced to two sources; on one hand, it represents an attempt of instinctive traditionalism to express and justify itself no longer in the sphere of feeling only, but in that of reason as well. It thus agrees with the general tendency we have pointed out above in contemporary England, which leads even the conservative doctrines and preferences to assume more conscious and rational forms. Pragmatism may be

Digitized by Google

described as a refined theory of empiricism. On the other hand, it is derived from the anti-rational and mystical reaction which outlived the latter half of the nineteenth century, and to which the twentieth seems to have imparted greater vitality. During the last fifteen years, as everybody knows, a more marked movement of opposition to the supreme requirements of reason has begun at the same time in all the countries of advanced civilization; religious souls, tender hearts, poetical imaginations, tempers craving for faith and anxious to preserve their cherished or sacred illusions, minds tired out or repelled by the stern discipline of thought, have proclaimed the futility of science, and disowned the delusive worship of a distressing, baleful or ever inaccessible truth.

The pragmatist philosophy, properly so called, is an element of that revival of intuition which blooms in all countries, a rich complex mysticism in which prevails the haunting intoxication of life. It appeared first in America, before it developed in England, where it was known as "humanism"; but previously, on English ground, between Spencer's evolutionism and the contemporary reaction, one might have found a transition and a sign of the coming change in T. H. Green's works. The Oxford philosopher had vigorously criticized the sceptical rationalism of Hume and of his successors, and had thus opened the way for the return to idealism. His apostolic zeal, his broad, devout Christian faith can be traced in the social movement of the University Settlements; and this practical active tendency of his

Digitized by Google

doctrine affords sufficient proof of its harmony with the essential aims of pragmatism.

Indeed, pragmatism, all things considered, is quite as old as English thought; it gives expression to its most characteristic and most ancient preferences, and naturally springs from its inner growth towards the full light of consciousness. Utilitarianism may be regarded as the chief tendency of that thought; but the so-called utilitarian philosophy impoverished and distorted its real complexity; so that the no less primitive needs of feeling, imagination and faith rebelled against this philosophy. Pragmatism attempts to connect closely, if not to reconcile, the utilitarianism and the idealism between which the English mind had been fluctuating for a century; on a utilitarian basis it builds up idealistic conclusions; or rather, it turns idealistic observances into the means of a higher utilitarianism.

The obstinate search after an indefinable, absolute scientific truth is as absurd as it is futile; for the universe cannot be known by the intelligence only; it refuses to comply with the ready-made outlines drawn by our logic, and cannot be reduced to simple laws. Through the shifting ocean of the approximate, the uncertain and the provisional, the necessities of action alone lay out safe, lasting paths; it is the network of these paths which constitutes the intellectual geography of the world; and the task of human wisdom is to explore and follow them all. Science is no doubt one of these rough charts allowing us to foresee natural sequences. But, though it owes its value to its

Digitized by Google

everyday verified applications, it cannot hold good outside the field of these particular applications; other domains are not ruled by it, lie beyond it. Confronting it, in opposition to it, the intuitions of the soul remain no less valuable and precious; they too are verified every day by facts; and against this verification the hostility of logic, ill qualified to attack them, is powerless.

Moreover, had we to make a choice, the method of the heart would be the more truly philosophic one. The substantial satisfaction afforded by the beliefs which give us the greatest power over Nature, is more fruitful than the proud enjoyment of a would-be harmony between our mind and things; and as the most fruitful idea is that which serves best the needs of action, it is the truest as well: what other criterion of truth is there for man, than that which he derives from the confirmations of experience? Thirsting thenceforward for realities and no longer for illusions, philosophy shall examine by what incentives the unknowable universe meets the gropings of our will to live; and each of us shall find truth in the rules, the maxims, the faith which can sustain his life. Thus sheltered from the withering destructive analyses of tyrannous reason, the salutary images of the world we owe to tradition, to experience, to old moral notions and tried religions, resume all their value and their strength; and the philosopher finds himself at one with the artless common sense of popular conservatism in its instinctive preferences and stubborn prepossessions.

To care only for those truths which derive their

Digitized by Google

reality from facts themselves, such is the method of pragmatism; to care only for the human truths, the measure of which is man, such is that of humanism; it is easy to recognize in both doctrines the same sceptical giving up of the hopes of abstract reason, the same utilitarian and realistic assertion of the rights of concrete experience. These ideas are even more significant than one might gather from the way they fare with philosophers; for they give definite shape to tendencies no less widely diffused in England than in America. From all intellectual quarters are converging the elements of a moral atmosphere which agrees with them; a synthesis centres round them, as round a focus of opposition to the still threatening rationalism. If political men, such as Mr. Balfour or Mr. Haldane, take to philosophizing, their thoughts prove singularly akin to those of James and Schiller. If one opens a treatise of Christian apologetics or questions an average cultivated man about his beliefs, one discovers that the foundations of faith are to-day in almost every case consciously or unconsciously pragmatic arguments. The explicitly utilitarian table of intellectual values is now widely accepted; and more deeply than exterior influences, it results from the spontaneous instinct of temperaments.

One may say that at the present time most Anglo-Saxon minds begin to be chiefly concerned with energetics and efficiency. Shrewder, more supple and subtle than the old form, this new utilitarianism annexes the inner province of feelings and ideas to the previously conquered

Digitized by Google

domains of industry, commerce, politics and comfort; and to the self-interested rules of conduct is added a moral hygiene, which aims at discovering and replenishing the sources of spiritual energy. How to govern one's thoughts in order to enjoy moral health; what bent to give one's mental life in order to increase its unity, stability, consistency; by what means to revive in oneself that wholesome joy in the daily work and in its monotony, from which optimism and success naturally spring, such are the new therapeutics with which physicians, pastors, moralists, faith-healers and Christian Scientists have enriched the practical thirst for knowledge of the modern man.

The power of influencing oneself is easily widened into that of influencing other people; and the cultivation of personal magnetism, of character and will as weapons in the struggle for life, is now part and parcel of practical education. Widening still, moral hygiene passes on from an individual to a social standpoint; and the sociologist, the theologian, the critic, on all occasions sacrifice the desire for truth at any price to the search after useful untruths, collective illusions and salutary fictions. The preference for intellectual sincerity, and its very notion, are thus getting blunted in many minds, whilst an unavowed renunciation of inner candour becomes the rule. One easily perceives the connection between this universal craving for efficient energy and the already mentioned movement which is bringing many Englishmen to the search for national efficiency. And thus the pragmatist or

Digitized by Google

neo-utilitarian tendencies harmonize with the rationalist and reforming tendencies opposed to them in so many respects.

But next to that moral hygiene, one may consider the kindred manifestations of the same intellectual and active impulse in other provinces of national life. The pursuit of health and joy, under the guiding influence of feeling and instinct, such is the object of the artistic and social currents through which Ruskin's æsthetic mysticism still diffuses itself. The regeneration of English art by a refreshed inspiration and a renewed technique, such is the aim of the "Arts and Crafts" movement, in which the disciples of Morris earnestly devote themselves to adorn with beauty the daily surroundings of life; their endeavours have already imparted to many English homes a tasteful simplicity, an ingenious and sober adjustment of ornamental devices to the practical uses of things. The "modern" style is a composite and cosmopolitan product in which an English origin is yet discernible. In sometimes unexpected shapes, a return to nature can be traced in it; and this very return is the main influence perceptible in many other phenomena of collective psychology.

The development of open-air exercises in England preceded their favour on the Continent; but it was a more modern growth than is generally believed, and assumed the importance of a social feature only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The recent years have witnessed its further advance, promoted by the infinitely greater facilities of touring. The pursuit of

Digitized by Google

physical energy through athletics and fresh air, the training of the will through self-imposed exertions, are to-day practised by almost all young people, in nearly all classes of society. Open-air exercises have increased the taste for travelling, already encouraged by so many material circumstances and moral influences; and both travelling and field diversions have considerably multiplied the points of contact between man and wild nature.

Now, this contact had long been sought for by some, pointed out and recommended by others, as the necessary means of a social cure, the instrument of an equilibrium that industrial civilization had destroyed. For a century, the feeling of natural scenery had resumed, in English art and literature, the place of which it had been, for a time, deprived by the rationalism of the classical ideal; for half a century, Ruskin's teaching had extolled nature as a source of beauty, health and happiness. Later on, W. Morris, drawing a sketch of the brotherly society of the future, set it in the lovely quiet green scenery of the English country, restored to its primeval freshness and purity. On the other hand, under the influence of scientific monism, and religious scepticism, in most souls surged the wave of the vague pantheism, at the same time instinctive and meditated, in which meet to-day the intelligences and the sensibilities of both the Old World and the New. Lastly, the boundless extension of towns, the decay of agriculture, the regeneration of the race under urban conditions, and the painful acuteness of labour problems in congested districts, again drew

Digitized by Google

the attention of all to the agrarian question, and directed the hopes of reformers towards the saving possibilities held in store by health-giving Mother Earth.

All these causes have brought about in England, during the last twenty years, a powerful widespread reaction against the estrangement between nature and the sensitive life of man which civilization, ever since the Middle Ages, had caused to deepen more and more. Various are the aspects of that movement; one might point out, for instance, the migration of citizens to suburban villas, the central districts being entirely left to daily business and trade, whilst financiers, merchants, mill-owners choose to live out of the towns; the "week-ends," which place the country, the sea, fresh air within the reach of all; the opening of "garden cities," with their groves, lawns, flower-beds, sheltered from industrial ugliness and dirt, which seem to foreshadow the human aggregates of the future; all the social charities which take sickly children away from the towns, give them for a while the life of the fields or the mountain air; and all that "back-to-the-land movement," the influence of which is felt in municipal or national councils.

Wide avenues are laid out through the old quarters, new parks are opened, the planning of future towns is supervised by a special law; the reviving of agriculture and the reconstitution of small holdings are indefatigably pursued; in England and Ireland, farmers are unsparingly granted the support of the State to allow them to acquire

Digitized by Google

the ownership of their land; loans are made to them for long periods; in some cases the expropriation of absentee or idle landlords is promoted by Act of Parliament; and a series of measures, about which Liberals and Conservatives find themselves at one, have striven, so far not very successfully, to call to life again the vanished race of yeomen.

Pragmatism, a broader and more flexible form of utilitarianism, illustrates with remarkable clearness the direction and nature of a far-reaching psychological and social movement, aiming at an increase of life by means of energy. As this energy in which the vital instinct hopes to find health and joy is that of the body, of sensibility, of intuition, of faith, one may say that through moral hygiene and the return to nature, English traditionalism, more conscious and meditated, is still expressing itself. On the contrary, it is chiefly from the intelligence that rationalism expects greater efficiency for the individual or the nation.

III

The chief movements of contemporary English thought are connected together, as is always the case, by numberless intermediate shades and degrees. The doctrines, the ideas and tendencies which are more especially derived from rational principles are not necessarily hostile to tradition; and even less are they necessarily averse to practical ends. It is easy to find a conservative and

Digitized by Google

traditional element in almost all English rationalists; and the utilitarian tendency, the pursuit of efficiency, is essential with almost all of them. Thus are determined the individual species of those general and abstract types, rarely to be found in their unadulterated state. More particularly, pragmatism, though it rebels against science and reason, is rational, and in some way affords a justification of experience; it is reconciled, it goes without saying, in many minds, with vigorous powers of reasoning and an entire sincerity of thought; and so far as English traditionalism assumes this new shape, it approaches the intellectual ideal of definiteness and consistency which it had always eagerly opposed.

It is yet necessary to draw a line between the various forms which the traditional spirit may assume at the present time and, on the other hand, those which are taken by the free search for truth or efficiency through a meditated adjustment of man to things and things to man. For the predominant characteristic of this search is the criticism of existing opinions, beliefs and institutions. Now, the critical mood is essentially repugnant to English conservatism, however willingly it may have often consented to correct itself. Ever since Burke, the advocates of historical continuity have denounced pure rationalism of the French type as a tool of destruction and ruin; and even more than the clinging to what is, the fear of what might be, the dread of a void into which society would be hurled body and soul by the downfall of order, lies at the root of the hatred

Digitized by Google

the average British instinct still feels against political, moral and social ideology.

Therefore rationalism in England, for the last three centuries, has had an eventful course, often checked, constantly threatened by the aggressive reaction of feeling and instinct. In order to live, it was obliged to adapt itself to its surroundings; and it was for practical ends, on the firm English basis of utility, that the greatest movement of rational thought, the so-called utilitarian philosophy, developed in the nineteenth century. In the same way, evolutionism is not a metaphysical construction, but a hypothesis, grounded on the data of science; positivism partly owed its success in England to its practical and realistic intentions. Leaving out those general doctrines, and such foreign influences—German or French—as may have been felt, the spontaneous growth of many minds, chiefly among the intellectual élite, has led them to adopt the logical agreement of thought with things or with itself as a criterion of truth more or less systematically adhered to. That strange effervescence of the mind which wants to understand even before it wants to live, or in order to live better, and which submits all ideas, institutions and men to a close scientific scrutiny, has been aroused in some English brains. One might even say that at the present time it is being aroused, or tending to be, in an increasing number of brains; though the day is yet far off when, as Meredith wished, every Englishman will know how to chew his provision of ideas. The usual course of nature, which introduces variety every-

Digitized by Google

where, and invalidates the rule by the exception, must be held responsible for that differentiation of the race; to it must be attributed too, as has been seen, the general circumstances of the present, under the influence of which English idiosyncrasies come ever nearer the common type of industrial and modern civilization.

The conflict of the critical spirit against religious dogmatism is going on in England, as on the Continent; it is hardly possible clearly to mark its phases. For the exception taken yet by public opinion to the open confession of infidelity conceals the fact that many consciences are silently drifting away from their old moorings. Still, in spite of the official loyalty of the State, of civil life, and literature, to the Christian religion, one can perceive a wavering of beliefs, shaken by scientific culture, by the new independence of thought, by the wish for moral sincerity, and, no less, by the eager craving for social justice. The close alliance of the forces making for political conservation with the Established Church is rousing against her the hostility of the democratic working class, though English Socialism as a whole is far from openly breaking with Christianity; on the contrary, everybody knows how frequently the Christian Socialist tendency is still to be met with.

Going by the name of "secularism," free thinking progresses among all classes; it possesses its own associations and regular means of expression. Its real strength, however, dwells in the secret adhesion of minds, and in the seeds of tolerance, of agnosticism, which the very atmo-

Digitized by Google

sphere of modern civilization is laying deep in the least conscious intelligences. Prepared by the numberless shades and degrees of the Protestant religion, already instinct with a spirit of free criticism; retarded and allayed by the habits of public life and the temper of the race, the evolution of the English mind towards purely human beliefs promises to be—if it is to be at all—an insensible and very slow transition.

On the other hand, the various mental attitudes which may be the outcome of the rational criticism of dogmas are represented in England, though not so profusely, perhaps, or so freely as in Germany and in France. Liberal protestantism has many disciples there, and its extreme varieties constitute, as elsewhere, a form of religion hardly distinguishable from mere morals. A faith in the saving virtue of the example set to men by the remarkable personality of Christ is the strongest and most general element of those now widely diffused beliefs; they easily shade off into the diverse forms of humanitarianism which in many minds has replaced all more definite religion. One of the most famous attempts to clear Christianity of the charge of irrationality was that of Matthew Arnold; the formulæ in which his criticism results rebuild on the ruins of traditional dogma a kind of moral pantheism, according to which the stream of tendency making for righteousness in the universe and in man's heart becomes the very substance of the Divine. More original is George Meredith's naturalistic and idealistic pantheism; from the cosmic laws embraced by our own mind,

Digitized by Google

from our contact with Mother Earth, which fosters our energy and health, and from the broad culture of the most human elements in our beings, emanates an ennobling influence through which the will of the universe radiates down to us. A feeling of respect touched with emotion for humanity, for nature, and for duty, either singly or combined, such are, then, the chief sources of spiritual elevation from which English rationalism is willing to draw.

Lastly, in its most uncompromising shape, it rests satisfied with the mere denial of the supernatural, and does not indulge in any measure of idealistic faith, however guarded. Modern pessimism, which owes much to the cold vision of a world deprived of all finality and justice, has found disciples in the traditional home of active optimism. James Thomson and Thomas Hardy, for instance, have expressed in their poems or their novels the tragic or calm despair of a mind detached from all soothing fiction. This attitude is still exceptional; such men are generally, in England, characterized by an unshaken equilibrium of thought and emotion, to which contribute their instinctive adaptation to daily life, their share of the robust will of the race, and their practical devotion to scientific, humane or social objects; and yet, such is the resistance of the very homogeneous moral atmosphere in opposition to which they live and think, that they might have been expected to feel very strongly indeed the anxiety of intellectual loneliness.

The rational criticism of the political and social

Digitized by Google

order is made, as has been seen, by the various Socialist sects and the Radicals; but outside public and parliamentary life, there are many thinkers who find fault with the ancient foundations of modern England. The divorce between the intelligence and reality is doubtless widening and deepening in England; and though there is no ground to foresee that a revolution may be its final outcome, this separation still can account for the quick transition and the crisis the country is now undergoing. Needless to say, the reformers do not agree in their reconstructive plans; but the main lines of their criticisms undeniably converge. These fall under three heads: either they denounce the unequal distribution of wealth, and the unfair social organization; or they take exception to this same organization from the point of view of its working, and of national efficiency; or then, going up to the very source of institutions and manners, they point out the weaknesses of the traditional English mind, and its imperfect adjustment to contemporary civilization. Thus the criticism of society finds its necessary completion in a criticism of thought and culture.

Already, with W. Morris, Ruskin's mystical Socialism had been strengthened by a more direct perception of realities, a more precise economic reflection; his Utopia bears the stamp of his rich original imagination; his analysis of present conditions is a relatively objective study. George Meredith's acutely penetrating irony criticized the hierarchy of classes, the alternate play of the two great political parties, the prestige of the aris-

Digitized by Google

tocracy, the action of public opinion and of the Press, the influences which mould public opinion, and the general organization of political and social justice in England; on the one hand, too much of a democrat to accept the existing order, he was on the other too much preoccupied with the necessity of educating the democracy to expect an immediate salvation from the overthrow of that order. The intellectual and Fabian Socialism of H. G. Wells analyses with unsparing clearness the incurably composite character of English society; its advanced economic evolution, its half-feudal structure; the power still wielded by the landed nobility, the concentration of industrial and commercial capital in the hands of a plutocracy, and the haphazard swarming of the multitudes below the standard of human dignity, doomed to an incomplete and precarious life. His reforming zeal chiefly attacks the conservative and empirical routine which interferes with the working of nearly all administrative organs; his scientific intelligence perceives the imperfect adaptation of institutions to their ends.

Bernard Shaw's aggressive and uncompromising rationalism not only dispels the economic mysteries or conventions by which capitalism tries to justify itself; it destroys the illusions or fallacies on which are based the historical forms of collective life and thought—property, the family, marriage, patriotism, the established religion, and morals. Never before had the exclusive rights of instinct, experience and feeling, affirmed and illustrated by all the development of the English people, been denied

Digitized by Google

or derided with harsher critical vigour. Coming to no precise conclusions, exerting no precise influence, for that pitiless dry logic too violently clashes with the average requirements of the British heart, Shaw's writings do away with all the accepted values, if they do not clearly set up a table of new values. His fame is chiefly due to the exterior merits of his manner; his fortune with the élite might be taken as a sign that the philosophic, social, moral uncertainties of contemporary thought have more than superficially penetrated into the land of intellectual discipline and hereditary beliefs.

Matthew Arnold had once called on England to choose between "anarchy" and "culture"; and nicknaming the nobility Barbarians, the middle class Philistines, the people a populace, he could point no other way to salvation than the meditated search after sweetness and light; so the more recent critics of English irrationality aim at reaching the lasting core of the common psychological tendencies, through the external institutions. Meredith, Wells and Shaw do not stop short of criticizing the national culture itself. They charge it with granting the intelligence too small a share, with clinging to traditional solutions and conservative routine, with weakening the critical faculties, and encouraging submission to received formulæ and established untruths. More precisely, they seem to perceive an alarming opposition between the English mind and the contemporary exigencies of moral sincerity, of individual and collective efficiency.

Digitized by Google

Meredith longed for the day when a versatile and free thought would play round those immovable bare pillars, John Bull's beliefs, feelings and prejudices. Wells emphasizes the scientific character of modern civilization; he foresees the peril of a new international competition in which the intellectual faculties will play an ever more important part; he sketches the picture of the society of the future, directed by engineers, electricians, chemists, and concludes that English empiricism must adapt itself or perish. Shaw indefatigably lashes the ruminating self-satisfaction which British "stupidity" opposes to all moral progress; his stinging paradoxes goad the robust slow beast, trying to awake, in its lumpish body, consciousness through anger.

What influence have those advocates of intelligence? Their action must obviously be limited. But it agrees too well with the very conditions of contemporary life, and the general evolution of modern England, not to be accompanied, if not followed, by a pretty wide and deep psychological change. The disciples of the "intellectuals" are many among the young generation of politicians, of administrators, of writers, who give its composite aspect to the England of to-day; their number is likely to increase still further in the future. For already education has partly received the stamp of the new spirit; it communicates it in its turn. The board-schools have been created after an almost undenominational and decidedly modern pattern; the concentration of powers, the unification of methods in secondary schools are carried on everywhere; a clear systematic will pre-

Digitized by Google

sides over the reform of the inorganic empiricism which characterized English public education. Technical studies are developed, more attention is paid to living languages; the formal classicism and the low utilitarianism which shared the domain of education between them, are correcting and completing each other, and by means of each other. The old Universities seem to open more widely to the breath of scientific life, and the recently created Universities are not loaded with the crushing weight of a glorious tradition.

Above all, industrial operations, the concentration of life in towns, the vividness of sensations, the eagerness of the struggle, and the diffusion of culture, are changing the very temper of the race, making it more refined and nervous. The young Englishman of the ruling classes, however strongly marked he may still be with the hereditary stamp, on many points shares in the increasing internationalism of ideas and tastes. The young workman of the skilled trades, the engineer, the constructor of bicycles or motor-cars, the man who supervises the machines which spin, weave, cut or shape cloths and metals, is naturally endowed with nervous, intellectual, moral dispositions different from those of the farmer or field-labourer. The "coming man" of Mr. Wells and of the Fabians will be less of an Englishman than his forefathers were; already at the present time, the first appearance of this type is rousing an obscure feeling of unlikeness and distrust in the instinctive and routine-ridden masses. Whether the historic metal of the race proves able to abide that unavoidable evolution, or breaks under

Digitized by Google

that unavoidable evolution, or breaks under the strain before its completion, the very metal of the English race seems to be undergoing a process of transformation.

Meanwhile, the disinterested activities of the mind bear witness, too, to that inner change. To the critical and rationalist tendencies one can trace back the artistic and literary attempts which deviate from the traditional preferences of the English taste, *i. e.* sentimentalism, an edifying purpose, the predominance of matter over manner. Roughly speaking, one might say that French influence always answered in England to a swinging of the national temper towards the intellectualist pole; more particularly, the influence of French art tends to bend English art towards another ideal than that which resulted from the spontaneous faculties of the race. Now, the literature of England, for about thirty years, seems to have followed closely enough the main phases of that of France. The "Parnassian" school of "art for art's sake" and objectivity, the Symbolist, the decadent and the neo-romantic school, have had in England their periods of favour and their representatives in the same order as in France, and, as it were, conforming to her example. Such a coincidence can as well be accounted for by the independent development of the national taste, and by the countless European interactions which weave the web of artistic life, as by the influence of a single country; nevertheless it throws light on the psychological evolution of English sensibility towards new longings, cravings, curiosities and needs.

Digitized by Google

The publication of Swinburne's first poems came as a shock on the British readers; to the open admission of sensuous love among the subjects for analytic poetry, the author added a spirited rationalistic inspiration. In spite of all the protests of the public taste, one may assert that this bold naturalism and this contempt for the religious, moral and social conventions which fettered art on all sides, have been constantly perceptible like a revolutionary vein running through the English literature of the last thirty years. The mind and the senses are thus, so to speak, slowly freeing themselves, encouraged by an awakening of the critical spirit and by modern daring. Round Swinburne had gathered the "fleshly school" of poetry, so called by the reprobation of traditional England. The harmless perversity of a Dante Gabriel Rossetti was continued and improved upon by the æsthetic sect, with whom Ruskin's devout worship of the beautiful was mixed with the subtle refinements of a decadent morbidity.

Any one who has been following the subsequent course of English literature must needs see that it is labouring under the same restlessness as that of France; and its various attempts in the direction of symbols and the incommunicable, of delicate impressions and exquisite sensations, express an evolution of taste analogous to that which prevails in Germany and France. In the same way, the impressionist school of painting points to an education of the eye and a progress in nervous complexity, on this side of the Channel, which are not easily reconcilable with the simple wholesome tradition of the great landscape and portrait

Digitized by Google

painters of the English school. Everything tends to suggest that the artistic sensibility of the British people is growing more complex, and, at the same time, less narrowly national in character.

It thus shares in the general advance of consciousness, of analysis and critical reflection. For if one goes deeper than the particular traits of some rare or audacious endeavours, one finds that the very conception of the function of art and of its relation to life is growing more comprehensive in those various movements. The national tradition considered the beautiful as a means for useful emotions; the subordination of æsthetics to ethics, the utilitarian notion of art, had characterized English literature, painting and architecture, since the time of the Puritans. Ruskin's doctrine, whilst reviving the worship of beauty, had not essentially modified that relation; the foundations of his æsthetic creed lie outside the domain of art itself.

On the contrary, the modern idea of the complete independence of the artist has recently gained much ground in England. The writings of Meredith, though rife with a manly and noble philosophy of life, freely appeal to the investigations of thought, like a wide-reaching and subtle pursuit of the beautiful through sincerity. Those of Hardy constitute an artistic and moral inquiry into the picturesque aspects and the psychological intricacies of a transitional age, and this inquiry dares pursue no other end than itself. Even more significant is the admirable and multiform effort of R. L. Stevenson, a pure artist, creating

Digitized by Google

emotions for the sake of their intrinsic beauty, earnestly devoting his powers to style as to the wonderful instrument of an intellectual activity the virtue of which is inferior to none. So far as the present generation is following the example of these masters, one may say that the consciousness of artistic liberty dawns upon modern England as a surer and freer consciousness of herself.

So the contemporary evolution of English thought seems to follow diverging courses; on one side, conservatism prepares for a defensive fight, and seeks more strength in a reasoned-out contempt for reason; on the other side, critical rationalism, aided by the needs of the time, slowly diffuses itself through facts and ideas. If both are progressing, it is because their converts are made among the party of mere numbers and over-intellectual passiveness. It is less and less easy for an Englishman to remain unaware of the grounds on which he shows hostility or favour to the modern spirit of democratic reform and moral freedom. Thus it is perhaps possible to perceive a general feature in that complex situation; the common aspiration after efficient energy unites the two great conflicting syntheses in a common effort of greater self-knowledge and surer self-possession. And thus, too, the social evolution perhaps tends to promote the doctrines of rational clear-sightedness more than the others; for whatever is lost by the unconscious is lost for instinct; and whatever consciousness wins is half-won for reason.

Digitized by Google

CONCLUSION

THE PRESENT TIME

DECADENCE OR EVOLUTION

SUCH, then, seems to be the condition of contemporary England: that of a nation perhaps unimpaired in its greatness, but alarmed, and anxiously interrogating itself; of an Empire which is being organized after having slowly developed, and which progresses from actual existence to self-consciousness, whilst the German Empire followed a contrary course, from consciousness and desire to actual existence.

No doubt the path England is to follow is not so arduous; but dangers of its own beset it. And first, will this progress from instinct to intelligence be effected? Will the supple faculty of adaptation the race has always displayed prove sufficient when the very mode of adaptation must be altered? Must an archaic constitution, traditional manners, a conservative temperament, be thoroughly modernized, and will they allow of such a change? And on the other hand, during that necessary transition, that prolonged crisis in which the country seems now involved, will it, without serious injury, resist the agitations of home politics, as well as the aggressive competition and hostility of foreign countries? Do not ten centuries of a glorious history, filled with the triumphs of empiricism, forbid to English hopes the era of intense and

Digitized by Google

scientific civilization into which mankind is rushing in its now world-wide domain? Will the fund of vitality, of moral and physical strength, the English people still can find in itself, allow it to vie with younger, better-equipped nations, in the very field of industrial and economic activity in which its robust genius once ruled supreme?

Belonging, like France, to the class of the old nations which are bent on maintaining their rank, and not to that of the new nations which want to assert their rights, England has to face the question of her decadence. Her own alarms have opened it. Behind a front of admirable prosperity, some fissures have not escaped the watchful eyes of English patriots. The commercial expansion brought to a standstill, the compared figures of imports and exports, a few defeats in production or exchange, the necessity of ever more strenuous exertions to keep the positions already won, and all such particular facts, may not be of decisive importance; the essential point is the loss of that industrial supremacy, to which British pride had become accustomed; there again, as in international politics, the conception of an equilibrium seems to replace that of the ruling power. In the division of labour which tends to prevail, English workshops seem destined to preserve no other advantage in the market of the world than that of their geographical situation in Europe, and of coal and iron fields so far inexhaustible. But no unique gift in her children, no inimitable superiority in art, or practical cleverness, promises England a privileged situation in the economic development of the future against the merciless laws of

Digitized by Google

competition. And the rise of new Imperialisms, hostile to her own, the advance of German ambition, the inevitable pressure which drives the flood of German strength, dammed up in Europe, towards the outlet of the sea and the colonies, the duel fought with millions between the navies of the two countries, have shifted the maritime supremacy of the British people, from the range of unquestioned commonplaces, to that of disputed facts, which cannot hold their ground without a contest.

Liberals as well as Unionists give orders for the construction of formidable "Dreadnoughts," and the English navy will probably keep, for a few more years, the margin of superiority considered indispensable for the safety of the Empire. Courageously, the burden of militarism is accepted by a nation formerly averse to it; conscription is among the possibilities of the near future. The territorial forces are reorganized and undergo serious training; whatever in recent inventions may be turned to use for national defence—submarines, airships, flying machines—is being eagerly studied, tried, utilized; quickly and eagerly alive to any danger threatening her safety, England stands and will stand in an ever more energetic attitude of combative defence against possible attacks, by many deemed probable, by many unavoidable. But the dire dream of an Anglo-German war, in which naval supremacy and the fate of the Empire would be at stake, broods only like an impending shadow over the confines of the future; that incalculable issue cannot be taken into account in an estimate of the present.

Digitized by Google

Meanwhile, a political crisis only too real has begun, the final outcome of which remains doubtful. After the 1910 elections, and the incomplete victory of the Liberals, a temporary settlement of the constitutional difficulties will, no doubt, be effected; but will the problem raised be thus solved? If the democracy, conscious of its greater strength and putting forth new claims, comes into collision with the very fabric of the English constitution, if the forms of the past can no longer comply with its wishes, it is the era of radical recasting which will perhaps begin, after that of readjustments. The threats of the Liberals against the House of Lords are met by the bold tactics of the Unionist party; on one side, the supremacy of the Commons; on the other, the referendum. Like Ireland, Scotland and Wales are now demanding some degree of self-government; the tendency to separation lies dormant at the core of British unity; will the federative ideal which radiates from the heart to the extremities of the Empire ebb back innocuously from the extremities to the heart? In the old "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland," will the Home Rule of each portion, if it is ever realized, be compatible with the harmony of the whole? Moreover, will not a social organization in which the property of land is concentrated among a few thousand owners, in which extreme wealth and extreme poverty everywhere confront each other, ultimately prove less stable, in spite of appearances, than that of a country like France, in which riches are better distributed, and where agriculture is still the most important industry?

Digitized by Google

And the sociologist, the moralist, scrutinizing national life, discern in it symptoms of decay and fatigue. The birth-rate, for instance, formerly very high, is now slowly but regularly falling; England must face the decline of that source of strength which lies in numbers, whilst the enjoyment of a recently acquired wealth has not yet impaired German fecundity. Then, in the urban centres where everything degenerates, signs are perceptible which point to some weakening of the race: such are the lowering of the average height among the London-born recruits; the stunted, wasted appearance of young people in the East-end and in many industrial towns; the new nervousness preying upon that famous stolid stubbornness, an essential trait in John Bull's moral physiognomy; have not the English mobs, the audiences of music halls, the crowds of Mafeking day and night, lost the dignity of an Imperial people by becoming an Imperialist one? Whilst the teaching of defeat, and the desire for energy, have instilled a temper of cool calculation into so many Frenchmen, does it not look as if French excitability had now crossed the Channel? And that indefatigable initiative, that conquering ardour, that intoxicating life and activity and pride, which have won half the world for the fleets and the merchants of England, are they not seen to flag, to degenerate into a preference for cheaply bought successes, for self-indulgence, for the routine of mechanical effort, for the slow methods of administrative inertia? How can it be that English trade, in its conflict with German competition, should bear the burden of the same

Digitized by Google

faults which, for a long time, caused the inferiority of French as compared with British trade?

Such are the painful questions consciousness will naturally ask itself, at the pessimistic hour when it takes the place of instinct. These symptoms are certainly not to be overlooked; but what nation with a long civilized past does not offer signs of a similar or even worse kind? And is not the increasing strain of modern life obviously levelling, as under the same weight of fatigue, all nations, both young and old? As a counterpart, how could we forget the manifold universal effort of English energy to assert itself again, and not to decay? In the task of military defence, there are very few who refuse to co-operate; to the task of economic defence, all unanimously bend their wills. Either by traditional instruments, the instinctive disciplines, the hierarchies of the past, the historic authorities, or by the new means, the fresh resources which science and intelligence can supply, conservatives, pragmatists and rationalists jointly work to maintain, to strengthen the body of moral forces on which the greatness of England rests.

In all orders of collective activity, the social fruits of that solidarity, which the diversity of opinions and beliefs is powerless to destroy, are still among the finest, the most hopeful this earth can show. Such are an unrivalled system of philanthropic laws, the recently instituted old age pensions, the war resolutely waged against unemployment, the laws relating to agriculture, the experiments of municipal Socialism, the extension of some political rights to women, perhaps at no distant date their final enfranchisement. Such are,

Digitized by Google

again, the feeling of duty, the everyday courage, the public spirit, the devotion to all glorious or obscure tasks, which still make up, at home or under distant skies, the proud and stoical virtue, the physical stamina and moral fibre of so many servants of the Empire. If the will to live is the safest source of life, English vitality does not seem seriously undermined.

Will England consent, will she be able, to undergo without injury the social and psychological transformations which seem to be demanded by international competition? Will her empiricism know how to rise above itself, and fearlessly to enter the higher sphere of meditated readjustments, without losing the benefit of its blind and groping infallibility? Or, stiffening in the rigid mould of her hereditary genius, will she, in spite of all, perpetuate in our old Europe the belated but achieved type of pre-scientific civilization? Between these two extremes, no doubt the wisdom of England will strike a middle course. The necessity of modernizing her institutions and her mind does not press upon her like a simple and immediate force; it is one of those slow, continuous, undefined, diffused pressures, with which life and history are familiar, whose countless composing forces allow of countless diverse reactions. England will succeed, no doubt, in yielding to it enough, without yielding to it always, to remain herself, and to open for herself new destinies.

Digitized by Google

GENERAL INDEX

America, 174, 187, 240, 259, 262
Angelico, Fra, 143
Anne, Queen, 131
Apprentices, Statute of, 47
Arnold, Matthew, 80, 178, 271, 275
Ashley, Lord, 147, 148
Asia, 174
Asquith Ministry, 15
Australia, 198, 244, 245, 246

Bacon, 35, 36
Balfour, Mr., 197, 262
Ballot Act (1872), 77
Baur, 60
Bentham, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 100
Birmingham, 30
Boers, 244
Boer War, 209, 227, 245
Booth, Charles, 202
Boulton, 21
Bright, 48, 49
Bristol Riots (1831), 67
Browning, 11, 171, 172
Budget of 1909, 15
Burke, 19, 52, 118, 268
Burne-Jones, 144
Butler, 59

Cambridge, 80
Canada, 198, 244, 245
Carlyle, 11, 84, 85, 91, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 115, 118, 119, 120, 136, 137, 141, 143, 144, 147, 165, 168, 175, 178, 257
Chamberlain, Mr., 197
Christ, Life of, 61
Civil War, The, 166
Cobden, 48, 49, 79
Colenso, Bishop, 63
Coleridge, 110
Combination Laws, 47
Commons, House of, 15, 66, 70, 71, 212, 215, 219, 231, 234, 255, 285
Commonwealth, The, 58, 166
Comte, Auguste, 42, 61
Co-operative Society of the Rochdale Pioneers, 157
Corn Laws, 49
Crimean War (1854–5), 88, 176
Crompton, 21
Cromwell, 173

Darwin, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 239
Denmark, 187
Descartes, 36
Dickens, Charles, 73, 85, 86, 87
Disraeli, 70, 71, 72, 78, 170, 177
Dorchester Labourers, 157

Education, Board of, 80
Edward VII, 10, 72
Egypt, 247
Eliot, George, 61, 85, 86, 170, 172
Elizabeth, Queen, 76, 130, 173
Engineers, Association of, 157
Essays and Reviews, 63
Eyre, Governor, 177

Fabian Society, 208

Digitized by Google

Factory Acts, The, 148
Fichte, 110
Fielden, 147
Fielding, 73
Fox, 71
France, 2, 36, 54, 63, 207, 271, 279, 283, 285
Froude, 123

Gaskell, Mrs., 170
George I, 173
George II, 173
George III, 173
George IV, 173
George, Henry, 205, 206
George, Lloyd, Mr., 233
Germany, 12, 58, 63, 79, 84, 187, 198, 279, 282
Gladstone, 71, 79, 219, 220, 221
Glasgow, 211
Godwin, 37
Green, T. H., 259
Guildhall, 255

Haldane, Lord, 262
Händel, 258
Hardy, 74
Harrison, Frederic, 61
Hodgskin, 108
Holland, 187
Hull Congress (1908), 215
Hume, 36, 39, 259
Huskisson, 77
Huxley, 61

India, 247
Indian Mutiny (1857), 174, 176
International Labourers' Association, 207
Ireland, 3, 224, 285

James, 262
Jean-Paul, 110
Jowett, 62

Kant, 110, 117
Keble, John, 123
Kingsley, 62, 63, 118, 147, 170, 175, 176
Kipling, 257

Labour Representation Committee, 214
Lamarck, 53
Lancashire, 23, 188
Land Nationalization League, 602
Land Restoration League, 206
Leeds, 30
Lewes, 61
Liverpool, 30
Locke, 35, 36
London, 26, 30, 107, 131, 211, 255
London, University of, 80
Lords, House of, 15, 66, 71, 94, 124, 143, 214, 219, 231, 232, 234, 255, 285

MacCulloch, 44
Malthus, 44, 46, 51, 76, 101
Manchester, 30, 41, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 57, 107, 174, 211, 230
Manning, Cardinal, 129
Marx, 45, 205, 206, 207, 209
Matthew, Father, 155
Maurice, F. D., 62, 63, 118, 170
Melbourne Ministry, 71
Meredith, George, 74, 270, 272, 274, 275, 276, 280
Millais, 144
Mill, James, 39, 41, 44
Mill, John Stuart, 11, 41, 42, 44, 61, 119, 120, 209
Mines Act, The, 148
Morris, W., 145, 168, 172, 257, 265, 273
Municipal Corporations Act, (1835), 76

Napoleon, 49
Navigation Act, 78
Newcastle, 30

Digitized by Google

Newman, 11, 84, 124, 125, 126, 127, 169
New Zealand, 245, 246
Normandy, 187

Oxford, 59, 60, 80, 121, 122, 123, 126, 130, 136, 165
Oxford, St. Mary's Church, 126
Owen, 108, 157

Paine, 37
Paley, 59
Palmer, 123
Parliamentary Bill, 15
Peel, 78
Percival, 123
Permanent Committee of Hygiene, 155
Pitt, 71
Pius IX, Pope, 129
Poor Law, 47
Poor Law, The New (1834), 76, 106
Priestley, 36, 39
Principles of Political Economy, 119
Printers' Unions, 157
Pusey, 123

Renaissance, The, 36
Reform Act (1832), 65, 66, 73, 74, 76, 218, 232
Reform Act (1867), 65, 66
Reform Act (1884), 65, 66, 72, 77, 111
Revolution, French, 37, 166
Ricardo, 43, 51, 120, 140, 157, 206
Rose, 123
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 144, 172, 279
Ruskin, 11, 84, 85, 91, 134, 136, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 165, 168, 169, 176, 178, 251, 264, 265, 273
Russia, 240

Sadler, 147
Salisbury Ministry, 221
Sartor Resartus, 111
Schiller, 262
Scotland, 3, 285
Scott, 144
Senior, Nassau, 44
Settlement, Law of, 47
Shaw, Bernard, 274, 275, 276
Smith, Adam, 36, 42, 44
Social Democratic Federation, 207, 212, 215
South Africa, 198, 244, 245
Spencer, Herbert, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 61
Staffordshire, 23
Stanley, 62
Stevenson, R. L., 281
Stones of Venice, 143
Strauss, 60
Swinburne, 172, 279

Taine, 81
Ten Hours Bill, 149
Tennyson, 85, 171
Thackeray, 73, 85, 86, 87, 170
Thompson, 108
Trades' Councils, 158
Turner, J. M. W., 138

United States of America, 12
University Settlements, 260

Venice, 138
Victoria, Queen, 9, 13, 47, 72, 73, 155, 166, 177

Wales, 3, 285
Waterloo, Battle of, 9, 37, 74, 166, 174
Watt, 21
Wells, H. G., 274, 275, 276, 277
Wesley, 121
William IV, 71
Windsor, 255
Workshop Regulation Act, 151

Yorkshire, 23, 188

Digitized by Google

INDEX TO DATES

1819. Law prohibiting admission of Children under nine into Spinning Mills, 147
1828. Abolition of Test Act, 75
1831. Bristol Riots, 67
1831. Factory Act, 148
1832. First Reform Act, 65, 66, 67
1833. Factory Act, 148
1833. First Grant of Money for Schools, 79
1833. Ten Anglican Sees suppressed in Ireland, 80
1834. Dismissal of Melbourne Ministry by William IV, 71
1834. The New Poor Law, 76, 106
1835. Cock-fighting and Bear-baiting prohibited in the streets, 154
1835. Municipal Corporations Act, 76
1835. "Pressing" of Sailors abolished, 154
1839. Grant of Money for Schools increased, 79
1840. Duelling dropped, 154
1840–5. General Inquiry about Labour, 148
1842. The Mines Act, 148
1844. Co-operative Society of the Rochdale Pioneers founded, 157
1844. Duelling prohibited amongst Officers, 154
1844. Factory Act, 148
1845. Lunatic Asylums submitted to control of the State, 153
1846. Abolition of Corn Laws, 78
1847. Ten Hours Bill passed, 149
1848. Permanent Committee of Hygiene created, 155
1849. Abolition of Navigation Act, 78
1851. Association of Engineers founded, 157
1851. Bill Passed for Improvement of Working-men's Houses, 155
1854–5. Crimean War, 88, 176
1857. Indian Mutiny, 174, 176
1860. Lords attempted to modify a Finance Bill, 71
1861. Trades' Councils, 158
1861–6. Second General Inquiry on Employment of Children, 150
1867. Second Reform Act, 65, 66, 69
1867. Workshop Regulation Act, 151
1868. The Case of Governor Eyre, 177
1868. First Trade Union Congress held, 158
1869. Irish Branch of English Church disestablished, 80
1871. Abolition of Purchase of Military Commissions, 77
1872. Ballot Act, 77
1876. Report Published by New Commission, 151
1877. Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India at Delhi, 177
1884. Third Reform Act, 65, 66
1886. Inquiry of Charles Booth undertaken, 202
1888. Creation of County Councils, 77
1908, Hull Congress, 215

Richard Clay & Sons, Limited, London and Bungay.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ETURN
D ➡ CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
202 Main Library 642-3403

DAN PERIOD 1 **HOME USE**	2	3
	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
1-month loans may be renewed by calling 642-3405
month loans may be recharged by bringing books to Circulation Desk
Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

APR 2 8 1977

TD AH/C JAN 15 '78

Dm, 6'76 UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
BERKELEY, CA 94720

YB 26989

Digitized by Google